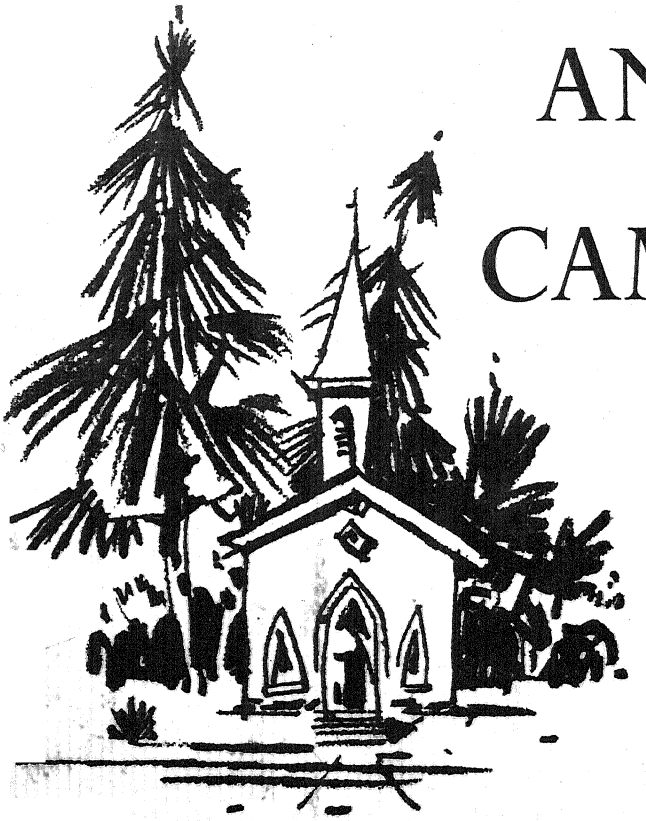
CHAPEL TALKS FOR SCHOOL AND CAMP



By Anne B. Townsend

$3.25

CHAPEL TALKS FOR SCHOOL AND CAMP

By Anne B. Townsend

EVERYONE working with young people—from directors of youth activities at schools and camps to directors of religious education—will appreciate the author's zest for living which shines through each and every one of these forty inspirational talks. Directed primarily to young people from the age of ten, the message implicit in each talk will appeal to all age levels. Throughout the book runs a pattern for living and the kind of gentle advice that will be remembered long after it is heard—food for private thought, and always-timely subjects for discussion with a few or with a larger group.

The theme for the series might be summed up as: "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who has no need to be ashamed." Miss Townsend stresses service to others, to the community, to the Church. She uses parables from the Bible, stories from Shakespeare and other well-known works to illustrate the points

(continued on back flap)

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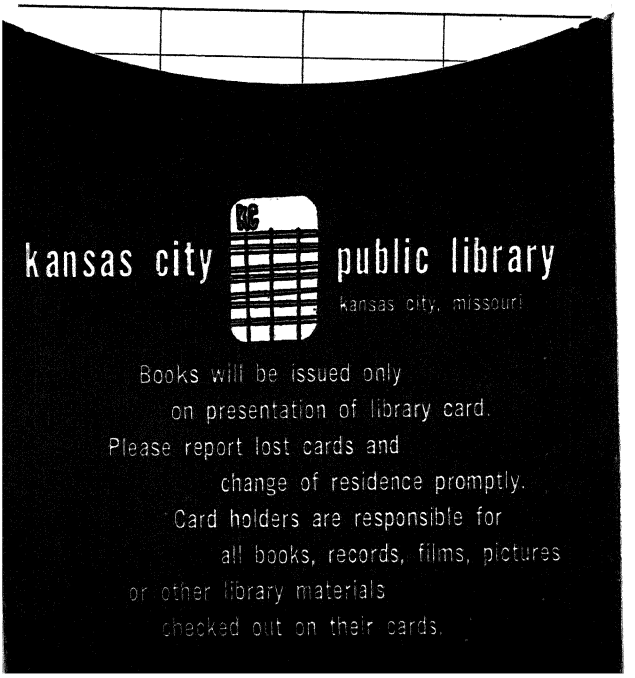
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CHAPEL TALKS FOR SCHOOL AND CAMP

BY ANNE B. TOWNSEND

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PREFACE

Many of these talks were written for use at the services held every Sunday afternoon during the summer seasons at Camp Merestead. The form of service used is simple—consisting of hymns, prayers, two lessons read by campers, an anthem by the choir, and the talk. Everyone in camp—campers, counselors, directors—takes part in the services; but the talks are written primarily for the campers, who range in age from nine to sixteen, and their subject matter determines the choice of the hymns, prayers, and lessons used.

ANNE B. TOWNSEND

Most Gracious Lord, we ask Thy blessing upon us all, gathered together under the shelter of this roof. Open our eyes to the beauty of Thy world, that we may learn serenity from the hills, strength from the woods, and steadfastness from the sky above us. In the close companionship of this life, may we come to a clearer understanding of ourselves and, so, of others. Teach us simplicity of heart and wisdom of mind that we may grow in stature every day. Bless us with the sense of Thy near presence all our lives, that we may never be afraid, and in the evening when darkness comes, may we rest in Thy peace.

The Camp Merestead Prayer

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AFFIRMATIVE LIFE

Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out.
Isaiah 54:2

HERE IS a call to action. We cannot enlarge the area of our living, or stretch the limits of our vision without positive, personal effort, without the willingness to affirm.

We know the difference between the affirmative and the negative, between "yes" and "no," between "can" and "cannot," "do" and "do not." We have learned what the words mean. But it is not only in words that we either affirm or deny: our thoughts, our actions, our whole lives can be affirmative or negative. We can have either the "yes" attitude or the "no" attitude towards everything; we can approach each new experience, each fresh opportunity, in the spirit of "can" or "cannot." The negative attitude instinctively rejects the new, would rather fail than make the effort, is satisfied with far less than the best, and is content with merely "getting by." Affirmative living is reaching, searching, enlarging, trying for the best. It says "I do" and "I can." It might be interesting to take note of how many times a day we say "I don't" or "I can't." It isn't the words in themselves that count, of course; it is that they express an attitude. We can be negative about everything. We

can pull away, avoid, refuse, wanting above all to be safe, and secure, and undisturbed. Or we can be affirmative in our living, welcoming with enthusiasm the new experience, looking for the wider view, stretching to reach what is beyond our present grasp.

There are questions we might ask ourselves. Am I apt to be "against" or "for"? Do I say "I don't" and "I can't" more often than "I do" and "I can"? Is my approach half- or whole-hearted? Do I say "no" or "yes" to life? The questions are searching; the answers can be revealing.

It is evident that the happiest and richest individuals, those who make the most of, and find the best in, every opportunity and every experience are the "yes" people. Why, then, do we so often take the negative attitude? Are we lazy, not wanting to make the effort, caring more for comfort than achievement, preferring to sit rather than be up and doing? Are we indifferent, happy with the second-rate, dull and unresponsive because we have no wish to grow? Are we stubborn, holding to our little, closed-in notions and ideas, never willing to give anything new a chance or try something different? Are we self-centered, so concerned with ourselves that we cannot see beyond the small space we occupy? Are we afraid, fearful of the unfamiliar and the unknown? Laziness, indifference, stubbornness, conceit, fear—these are negative qualities, these force us to say "no." And if we do say "no," we grow smaller as we grow older.

As an example of the negative attitude, we might take a look at the animal world and consider the turtle. Of course, according to fable, he beat the hare in their famous race; but in ordinary life he retreats into his shell at the first sign of danger, or when anything unfamiliar appears in his path. Within the protective covering of his personal fortress he may find temporary safety, but both progress and vision are reduced to zero. A shell can be comforting and secure, but it is certainly confining! If we are turtle-like in our responses to the challenges of life, we shall never go very far or grow very much.

The affirmative attitude does not make for easy or comfortable

living, but it opens doors for us so that we may go out, and explore, and find. We cannot sit and wait, shut our eyes and deny, and hope for growth. No one can hand us a rich experience. We are given opportunity, but it is realized only by what we see in it and what we make of it. Are we willing to accept the challenge of every task, every lesson, every contact, every experience, no matter how small or how short, and welcome each opportunity to learn a little and grow a little? Do we give our whole hearts and minds to life? If so, we are saying "yes" to it.

Jesus said: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." "More abundantly"—in greater richness and fullness—not just life, but "abundant" life, rich, full, creative, productive, affirmative life. We can drift, and dream, and deny—and live. But this is not life as God created it and Jesus lived it.

We can close the doors of our small houses, and draw the curtains, and there will be coziness and security. But shut out forever will be the light and the far view, the chance to test our strength, and life in all its fullness.

THE CARELESS WORD

Men will render account
for every careless word they utter.
Matthew 12:36

THE TEXT says "every *careless* word." It is not often that any one of us would plan, carefully and deliberately, to harm others by what we say to them or about them. But the hurt we give by our thoughtless words can be just as destructive as any inspired by malice. And the excuse that we had no intention of injuring anyone is no excuse at all. We are as responsible for our careless words, and acts, as we are for our considered ones, and they are equally hurtful. Words can delight, and comfort, and create, but they can also destroy. We may not realize their power, but it is unlimited, and to be thoughtless or uncontrolled in their use is a dangerous practice. We use words as naturally and normally, sometimes almost as often, as we breathe, and we cannot stop for serious thought every time we speak. But we must realize that a careless remark can do great harm or give deep hurt. We are responsible for what we say, and unless we are not concerned with possible injury to others, we must understand and have respect for the power of words.

Words spoken in anger, or when our emotions are out of control, can do great harm, not only to others, but to ourselves. We say

things at such times that we would not consider saying had we stopped to think, and of which we are ashamed afterwards. But once spoken, words cannot be unsaid. No matter how much we try to explain, deny, or excuse them, we have not the power to take them back. As an illustration, probably we can all remember a time in the past when we picked up a stone and threw it into a quiet pool of water. Perhaps we tossed it carelessly, not thinking, or perhaps we flung it angrily to relieve our feelings; but once it left our hand, we were powerless to change its course. Nor could we do anything to lessen its effect. It shattered the calm of the water as it hit, and then, in ever-wider circles, the disturbance it made stirred the whole surface of the pool. A spoken word is as final as a thrown stone. And so we would be wise to learn the lesson of not speaking until our feelings, our tempers, are under control. Are there not many times when we wish with all our hearts that we had not said something? Once said, we can do little about it, and the only solution would seem to be to make sure that we stop to consider, to get ourselves well in hand, before we say the words for which we shall be sorry afterwards. We cannot hope not to be angry at times, but we can learn not to speak until the anger has been controlled, until our minds, not only our emotions, are working again.

We hurt others when we make fun of them, when our remarks hold them up to ridicule. We do this thoughtlessly. We do not intend to be unkind, but it is easy to inspire a laugh, to acquire a reputation for wit, by making amusing comments about others. We enjoy being able to entertain our friends and give them a good time in our company. There is certainly nothing wrong in this, but unfortunately the easiest and cheapest way of being funny is to poke fun at someone else, and these careless words of ours can do real harm. When our wit is at the expense of another, we can be sure we are hurting, and it is a hurt that can cut deep.

We can inflict the greatest injury by our words when we repeat gossip. We would not think of telling a deliberate lie about someone in order to harm, but we are quite happy to pass on something

that someone has told us about somebody else. Gossip is rumor, not fact, and it is usually malicious; there is a sting in it. We do not use the word "gossip" in connection with constructive reports of others, or stories favorable to them. When we repeat gossip we are "throwing mud" at someone, and we do not stop to consider whether or not the story is true. We do it carelessly; it amuses us, or makes us feel superior, or satisfies our need for attention. But every time we repeat a bit of gossip, we are keeping it alive and helping it to grow. We are responsible for it. Possibly, even probably, it is untrue, surely it will hurt, there is the chance it may destroy. Are we willing to take the responsibility for this? We are responsible if we allow ourselves the indulgence of repeating, without thought for truth or consequence, a malicious story, a piece of gossip, about another person.

"Men will render account for every careless word they utter." That statement may shock us, and it should. We are responsible for our own words and they have unlimited power, for good or for evil. We cannot dare to be careless in their use.

FREEDOM

I will keep thy law continually, for
ever and ever; and I shall walk at liberty.
Psalm 119:44-45

"LAW" and "liberty": as separate words they are familiar to us; used together they are not familiar enough. For it is not easy to accept the idea that unless we obey we cannot be free. If law imposes a rule of conduct on us, and liberty grants us freedom of action, is there really an inescapable connection between the two words, the two ideas? In our willingness to answer that question affirmatively lies the measure of our maturity, for until we accept the fact that without acceptance of law there is no real freedom, we do not begin to "grow up."

In this world of ours there are many kinds of law, but always there is law. Without it there would be chaos. There is man-made law, conceived and written for the protection of citizens. There is natural law, ordering the universe. There is moral and spiritual law, governing the development of character. There is law because we need it. To have a community without laws, a universe without order, or a life without rules of conduct would guarantee disaster. And yet, in our human wish for freedom, we are tempted to believe that the way to it lies through disregard for law. We might well ask:

"If we are bound by rules and regulations, how can we be free?" But, at the same time, we must ask: "Without law and order, is freedom possible?"

"I will keep thy law—and I shall walk at liberty." This refers to moral law—God's rule of life—and to spiritual liberty. These are big subjects, so big that we cannot begin to understand them until we have grown up to and through them. But we can apply the text to other law, too, and translate it into practical terms, and see if it applies to our everyday lives.

There are man-made laws. Would we be freer if there were not, or do we know greater liberty because there are and because they are enforced on us? As an example, a familiar one, we have laws governing the movement of traffic on our roads. If we did not, we should hardly dare to venture out. Traffic rules are needed to protect everyone. When they are obeyed, we may travel in comparative safety—we are at liberty to come and go as we like. When they are disregarded, our freedom of action is endangered.

There are physical laws. There are rules of good health. If we break them, we suffer. We lose the strength and vitality that we need for growth; we are no longer free to accomplish what we should like.

There is order in the natural world. We know that the sun will rise and set, the tide will rise and fall. Because of the laws which govern these things, we are free to plan the schedule of our lives.

There are rules of good conduct, unwritten but binding, dictated by the society in which we live, rules we obey by the exercise of self-discipline and self-control. If we disregard or break them, not caring, or in our desire to lead "free" lives, we are no longer at liberty to claim the rights and privileges of citizenship.

Everywhere we meet with law. Early in our lives, and all our lives, we are faced with the fact that if we do "this," then "that" will follow. As very small children we are, perhaps, forced to learn the law of fire. We discover that if we come too close to it, if we do not respect it, we are burned; we find that if it gets out

of control, it destroys everything in its path. But we also learn that when we understand and keep the rules, when we control ourselves and it, it gives warmth, and comfort, and beauty, and we are free to enjoy it. There are rules in everything.

There must be: if there were not, there would be no security, no surety, no order, no happiness. Existence would be a haphazard, meaningless business, and be dominated by uncertainties and fears. Surely it is the laws of the universe that make it possible for us to live with hope and faith, the disciplines of life that give us strength. And with strength comes freedom—freedom to grow, to do, to be, to reach. Without discipline we are weaklings; without law we are lost.

"I will keep thy law continually—and I shall walk at liberty." There is no freedom except within the framework of law and order. To accept the rules of Christian conduct and character, to learn the disciplines of Christlike living is to know the meaning of liberty.

COURAGE FOR OUR FEARS

Trust in the Lord for ever,
for the Lord God is an everlasting rock.
Isaiah 26:4

WE ARE all afraid at times. Our fears may be small ones or large ones, and the fears of one person may differ in every respect from those of another, but only if we were without feeling or imagination would we be entirely without fear. Sometimes we are afraid of an immediate danger, often we fear the future, or we worry and are anxious about those we love. But because we are afraid at times, it does not follow that we are cowards. Cowardice shows only when we allow our fears to get the upper hand and give in to them, for we are bravest when we face up to fear and conquer it. We are not cowards when we are afraid, but we shall be cowardly unless we learn to live with our fears, whatever they may be, and master them. We must learn courage; we cannot get along without it. And courage comes with faith—faith in ourselves, in others, and in God. If we can learn to trust, we shall be able to face our fears, get the better of them, and use them for our growth.

Faith in ourselves is important. If we are unsure of such things as our own self-control or honesty, or our own powers of endurance, or our own judgment, we shall not have the courage we need for

the times when we are afraid. We must be able to depend on our own strength when we need it. We know that each of us is capable of being the kind of person in whom she can have confidence, for whom she can have respect. Each of us has to work faithfully and long to make herself that kind of person, but it is within the power of all. We must be sure not to confuse conceit, egotism, or self-satisfaction with self-confidence, for they are different things. When we are conceited we have an inflated opinion of our own importance and talents; when we have faith in ourselves we know, humbly and gratefully, that within us, God-given, is all the strength we shall need to live bravely. We can, we must learn to have faith in ourselves. This will give us courage for our fears.

Faith in others is necessary. We must learn to have confidence in those to whom we have given our love and respect, for we need human companionship and help when we are afraid. Fears become smaller, and may even disappear, when we can share them with those we trust. Perhaps we find it difficult to have complete faith even in our friends. If so, let us question ourselves: Is it our fault, not theirs? Have we allowed ourselves to fall into the destructive habit of being suspicious and jealous, of looking for faults, of being ready to be hurt? If we trust our friends, they will not fail us. We must learn to have faith in others, and we can. They will give us help when we are afraid.

Faith in God is essential, for He is the one sure source of courage for all our fears. There will be times when we are unsure of ourselves; there will be moments when even our closest friends seem far away. But God's power and love are constant. There is a scene in Bernard Shaw's play *Saint Joan* when the courage that comes with faith is expressed in triumphant words. The young Joan, hearing the voice of God in her heart and armed with His strength, has led France to victory and given the Dauphin his crown. Now she stands before King and Archbishop, charged with sorcery, and the realization comes to her that no human hand will be raised to save her from being burned at the stake, no human agency will support her. Betrayed by her country, accused of heresy by her

Church, deserted by those she has served and saved, she speaks: "Do not think you can frighten me by telling me that I am alone . . . my loneliness shall be my strength too: it is better to be alone with God: His friendship will not fail me, nor His counsel, nor His love. In His strength I will dare, and dare, and dare, until I die."

God will never fail us if we learn the way to Him. But we must learn it. Faith does not come to us all at once, without doubts or without struggle; it must grow deep roots before it is secure. If we find that our faith is not strong enough to dispel our fears, it is because we cannot see beyond ourselves. God does not fail us: it is we who fail to find Him. And we fail because we put ourselves in His place. Perhaps we lose faith, and courage, because it seems that our prayers are not being answered. But what are we praying for—something that *we* want? And what do we expect the answer to be—one that *we* would give? Is our prayer asking something for ourselves, or is it of thanks, and praise, and surrender? Prayers are answered, even though we may not like the answer, or may not understand it because our sight is limited. Do we lose faith, and courage, because we fail? The failure is ours, not God's. Do we lose faith, and courage, because we see injustice, suffering which seems undeserved, tragedy for which there appears no reason? But how can we know the reasons? We cannot expect to see far enough or deep enough to understand these things. We must accept them, in faith. We repeat the words in the Lord's Prayer: "Thy will be done." Do we say this thoughtfully, gladly, sincerely? If we do, if we can, then we do not question, but accept: "Thy will," not ours. We do our best, we give our best, and we leave the issue, the answer, in God's hands, knowing that we can trust ourselves to Him. This faith will give us all the courage we shall ever need.

PATIENCE

Be still before the Lord,
and wait patiently for him.
Psalm 37:7

We find it hard to be patient. We need to be, and there are times in every day when our patience is tested. To accomplish what is worth doing, we must have patience; to become strong, we must have patience. Patience is demanded of us if we would learn, and if we would teach, and if we would lead. Anything with deep roots grows slowly, and it takes time to dig foundations. And all that is tall and reaches towards the sky, all that is secure and strong, must be rooted and grounded surely and well. This takes patience, for the process is slow and cannot be hurried.

To prove to ourselves how hard a task it is to learn patience, we might consider how few really patient people we know, and remember how many times a day each of us is impatient, with others, with circumstances, with ourselves. And in our impatience, we destroy. Patience is constructive, and brings great rewards.

Patience must not be confused with laziness. Both suggest inaction, and they might seem alike to us. But laziness is a negative thing. When we are lazy we are inactive because we want to avoid making effort. Patience is positive. When we are patient we are

quiet, and calm, as the result of an exercise of will. Laziness requires nothing of us; patience demands self-control. They must not be confused.

For the sake of emphasis, it might be well to look at some of the ways in which we are apt to show our impatience. For one thing, we are in such a hurry. We want accomplishment right away; we want things done all at once. We want to see results, reach our goals, and achieve our purposes quickly. And so we bustle about and jump around, and worry and strain and try to go faster. We forget that between the beginning and the end of anything worth doing is a long stretch that cannot be skipped over. There is no way to real accomplishment but the long way. We cannot take short cuts and expect good results. It seems hard for us to accept that fact, and we become nervous, fretful and impatient, and wear ourselves out. And then we haven't the energy or the strength left in us that we need to accomplish what we want. What we make is not worth making if our work is hurried and careless. We talk of "saving time." For what are we saving it? It is not something that we can store away for the future, and it would seem wiser to use it thoughtfully and patiently while we have it.

We are apt to be impatient with others. If they seem slow or clumsy, we are inclined to be annoyed; if they don't agree with us, we fuss. We want our friends to live up to our ideal of them, and when they don't, we are irritated. But what right have we to lose patience when others do not follow our lead, or be scornful if they do not show the same skill at something as we? Their ways are probably just as good as ours, perhaps better. Their talents may be different from ours, but just as fine. Do we always behave well? Then why be impatient with others when they don't? They have their reasons for it, as we do. Impatience is destructive. To allow it in ourselves is to lose the happiness of fellowship, the respect of our companions, and perhaps the affection of our friends.

We are often impatient with ourselves. We want to do right, we want to be fine, and when we do not and are not, we become discouraged. We make resolutions, and break them, and give up.

We determine to be good, and expect goodness to come right away. But we cannot build character in a day, or a year. Only long, patient effort brings the qualities worth having. To be critical of our mistakes and our failures is one thing, to recognize and dislike them is a necessity. But we need patience with ourselves when we fail, for if we are impatient, we shall never learn or never grow.

We are impatient for the perfection we dream of to arrive. But each time we lose our patience, we lose our perspective, and we cause hurt—to our chances of success, to others, to ourselves. Impatience is destructive. It makes the difficult times we have to face not shorter and easier, but longer and harder. We learn, we achieve, we grow, only slowly and patiently.

The moment of discovery, of success, is a dramatic one, the one to be recorded in history. The stories of Balboa and his "peak in Darien," Newton and his apple, Franklin and his kite, put the spotlight on the particular instant, seem to say that suddenly, in a flash of vision, these men made earth-shaking discoveries. What we may forget is that behind these dramatic moments are years of patient research and work, with periods of discouragement and seeming failure. The story of Pierre and Marie Curie is an example. These two, husband and wife, have their "moment" in history and everlasting fame as discoverers of radium. But when they finally were able to isolate pure and visible radium, success was the result of years of concentrated, dedicated, unceasing work carried on in a leaky, earth-floored shed that was as unhygienic as it was uncomfortable. And they were unsupported by financial help or friendly encouragement. As Eve Curie expresses it in her book, it was only her mother's "terrible patience" that kept them going day after day, year after year, in the face of almost incredible obstacles. Without patience we shall not succeed.

"Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for him." Is there enough stillness in our lives? Do we take time to listen, and to learn, with our minds and hearts as well as with our ears? There is an outer stillness, which we call silence. Too often we are uncomfortable in it and feel we must fill it with sound. But it is only

in silence that we learn to think, only in quietness that we come to know ourselves. And there is an inner stillness, too, that is a spiritual quality. It is the quality that allows us, in humility, to be quiet within ourselves so that we may hear and learn from others. This is the stillness we must know if we are to hear that which makes no sound, the stillness in which we may hear God's voice as, in patience, we wait for Him.

SPEAKING THE TRUTH

Speak the truth to one another.
Zechariah 8:16

We would do well to think about our honesty, for it matters as much as anything in our lives. It is not as simple a thing as we might suppose, and "the truth" is not always plain to see. But unless we can learn to speak the truth with words and without them, unless we can be honest with ourselves and with others, we are in serious trouble.

We speak of the keystone of an arch, that which holds the parts together, or the foundation of a house, that on which the building rests. They must be made of material that will endure, that can be depended upon not to crack, that is sound all the way through. No matter how beautiful the plan, how lovely the form and color, if what we build has not strength at the foundation it will collapse. And what is true of architecture is true of living. What we make of ourselves will not be of real or lasting worth unless our growth is based on what is true, genuine, and strong to endure. A keystone must be chosen before we can build character, and we could make no finer choice than honesty. If we are honest, if we can learn to "speak the truth," we can face the task of growing up with the assurance that though our progress may be slow, we have a foundation for it which will never give way.

Without honesty we are in trouble. We are in trouble in our friendships, in all our relationships with other people. If we are dishonest we shall not be trusted, and without trust and confidence, there is no friendship worthy of the name. We forgive our friends for many things, as they must forgive us over and over again, but if they are not honest with us and we with them, what is lost is the most serious matter in any relationship, the loss of faith. Without honesty there is no happy companionship, no real friendship.

Without honesty we are in trouble with ourselves. And, surprising as it may seem, it is not in the least difficult to be dishonest in our opinion and knowledge of our own selves. How often do we find excuses and alibis for our bad behavior? How often, in our own minds, do we put the blame on the other person when something goes wrong? How often do we persuade ourselves that our failure is due to bad luck or "fate" being against us? Quite often, unfortunately, and when we do, we are being less than honest. Mostly the fault is in ourselves, not the other person, not our "luck," as we call it. If we run away from the truth about ourselves—and how easy and pleasant is the path in that direction—we shall never make much progress. Let us learn to know ourselves as we are, not as we imagine we are, or as we should like to be; let us question our motives, our reasons for acting as we do, until we are sure we know the "why" of our words and behaviour. Let us face the truth about ourselves, for then, and only then, shall we have the secure base we need for character building and growth.

It is surprisingly easy to be fooled about ourselves, and often we are encouraged in this false image by others. There is a French fairy story that tells of a young prince who, under an enchanter's spell, grew up with a nose so large that it covered half his face. But, as a result of being pampered and protected from babyhood, he was brought up to believe that a long nose was not a defect but an asset and, being full of vanity and self-satisfaction, he never really looked at himself! Even when he went out into the world where people commented on and laughed at that over-sized feature, he could not bring himself to admit that there was anything wrong

with him, and he became resentful and unhappy. There is a happy ending to the story, of course, for finally the prince fell deeply in love with a princess, and one day in raising her hand to his lips for a kiss he found his way blocked by his nose! For the first time in his life he faced the fact that there was something wrong with him and brought himself to the point of admitting it. So the spell was broken and the nose shrank to normal size. Perhaps we can read the moral in this tale, even though our weak features are not in our faces!

Unless our beliefs are honest ones, we are in trouble. It is not what we should like to believe, or what someone else believes, that counts, but what we ourselves, through our own thinking and understanding, have come to realize. Opinions, beliefs, ideals must be honest ones, our own, if they are to serve us well. Our faith in God must be an honest faith, developed and deepened and strengthened through our own efforts, or we shall lose it when we need it most. It is not God who fails us when our faith wavers, but we who have failed to find the way to Him with honest minds and hearts.

"Speak the truth to one another." We cannot do it unless we speak it to and of ourselves. And it is not so much in our words that we speak the truth, but in ourselves, in what we are rather than what we say. Learning to be honest is a slow process; truth does not come to us complete, unmistakable, all at once. We learn it in small things, in day by day living. It is not easy to be honest, especially with ourselves. But when we learn to "speak the truth," we can build with the certainty that we build on rock.

SELF-RESPECT

Do your best to present yourself to God
as one approved, a workman who has no need to be ashamed.
II Timothy 2:15

We could have few ambitions finer than this. To be able to look at all we do, each day, and feel honestly that there is nothing in it of which we need be ashamed, to stand before God in the knowledge that we are as He would have us—surely these are the highest standards of conduct and character we could set for ourselves. To keep them always in mind, and give our best to the task of reaching them, would be to grow in stature every day, and in quiet confidence and strength too.

"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved"—to God, not to others. It is God's judgment with which we should be concerned, not the opinions of our friends and companions; it is in God's eyes we must see ourselves, not through the eyes of those around us. And then, "as a workman who has no need to be ashamed." Shame, or the reverse of it, is a personal thing. It is we ourselves, our actions, our words, our inner selves, that cause us to be ashamed or not; it is we who must judge at the end of a day whether or not we should feel shame in connection with our work, our accomplishment. Can we rid our minds of our worries

about what others think of us, and have a clearer view and a more honest knowledge of ourselves? If we can, we shall have a better idea of how we appear before God, and this is what matters.

Do we know what we should be in order to meet with God's approval? Of course, we know. We know because we have been told, because we have the example of the life of Jesus on earth, and His words, too. And we know because of the way we feel, deep down inside us. That thing we call "conscience" is a sure guide if we take time to listen to it with quiet and thoughtful attention.

It is not the respect of others that should concern us; it is our own self-respect, based on honest self-knowledge. We must understand what "respect" means. A dictionary definition is "a just regard for and appreciation of worth." When we "have respect," then, it means that our opinion is a fair one, and that we know what is of genuine value. Self-respect is not egotism or conceit, based on false and inflated opinions of ourselves. If we are to win our own self-respect, we must be worthy of it. It is earned by and with ourselves alone. Only we can know if we merit it; only we can make ourselves deserving of it. And if we can, truly and honestly, gain our own self-respect, we know that we can come to God as "one approved." Then we need never worry about the respect of others.

Is our work of such quality that we may look at it without being ashamed? It is not the size or the importance of the work we do that matters, whether it is a big task or a little one, whether it is routine or exciting. It is the way we do it, what we give of ourselves to it, that makes the difference. And it makes a difference in more ways than one. Perhaps we could apply Benjamin Franklin's familiar maxim—"For want of a nail, the shoe was lost; for want of a shoe the horse was lost; for want of a horse the rider was lost"—to the question of workmanship. Why the blacksmith failed to finish his job, we don't know. He may have been lazy, or merely careless, or perhaps he didn't think one nail was very important, but his neglect had rather far-reaching consequences. If we tackle a job, no matter how small or uninviting it appears, with the desire and the determination to do it as well as we possibly can,

and give it our best all the way through, we shall have no need to be ashamed of the results. And, in addition, we shall have enjoyment and satisfaction in it. When our work is reluctant and careless, we can have neither pleasure nor pride in it.

"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who has no need to be ashamed." These words give us an ideal, and also a practical, reachable standard of conduct and character. We can understand them, and we can relate them to our own lives. They are meant for all of us. What we need is the determination to make our work and ourselves acceptable to God. We may never have complete success, but if we "do our best," we shall have done much.

GENTLENESS

Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts.
Zechariah 4:6

"By my *Spirit*"—the spirit of love, of mercy, of gentleness as opposed to the rule of force. We need to be reminded of the calm, quiet depths, for the earth on which we live is noisy and in a hurry, full of "sound and fury." It seems as though the shouting of the headlines, and the blaring of the loud-speakers, and the roaring of the machines had almost succeeded in drowning out the gentle voices of patience and wisdom. We appear to be accepting the belief that the bigger something is, the finer it will be; that the faster we travel, the better chance we have of arriving first; that the more loudly we speak, the more clearly we shall be understood. In a world of violence it is easy to forget the strength of gentleness and of serenity.

Perhaps we are afraid to be gentle, afraid that we shall be thought weak and spineless, even cowardly. Somehow we allow ourselves to believe that roughness and rudeness are signs of strength, that to be a bully takes courage. We are mistaken. True gentleness wins affection, and demands respect.

Perhaps we are not strong enough to be gentle. For gentleness requires self-control, patience and firmness, bravery and faith. The

emotionally uncontrolled person is not gentle; we do not sense gentleness in one who is fearful, or wavering, or impatient. The gentle touch is a firm, sure touch, and instinctively we have confidence in it. We cannot learn, we do not dare, to be gentle until we can trust ourselves and until our faith is certain. It is our weaknesses, our doubts, our dishonesties that lead us into blustering and bullying to "cover up" for ourselves. We need strength before we arrive at gentleness.

One of Aesop's fables tells of a dispute between the wind and the sun as to which had the greater strength. In order to settle it, they agreed that whichever could force the traveller coming down the road to take off his coat would be proved the stronger of the two. The wind was the first to try. He puffed, and he roared, and he wailed; but the harder he blew, the colder the traveller became and the more closely he wrapped his coat around him. Then came the sun. Quietly and gently he shone down on the road until, in the comforting warmth of his rays, the traveller threw aside his coat. And the gentleness of the sun was proved stronger than the bluster of the wind.

Perhaps we underrate gentleness, thinking that because it does not advertise itself it cannot be important. But the force of gentleness is tremendous. If we stop to consider how softly dripping water, quietly and patiently over the years, can wear down rock or if we take time to marvel at the power of a tiny, pliant leaf pushing its persistent way through frozen ground, then we shall realize, perhaps, that the strength of small, calm, gentle things is the strength that prevails, and endures.

Gentleness is disarming. When we are angry, in a quarrelsome and resentful mood, headed for trouble, it is not likely that we shall be helped to regain our self-control or our judgment if we are shouted at or forcibly restrained. Such treatment is apt to make us more defiant. But when our bad temper is met with gentleness, a gentleness compounded of understanding and affection, we cannot but be ashamed. And with shame comes a return to reason and control.

Gentleness has the power to heal. When we are hurt, confused and lonely, it is to the gentle ones of the earth that we turn. We sense that from them we shall have comfort. They are sure in their faith, these gentle people, and strong in their patience and self-control, and we trust them, even with our weaknesses and our fears.

"Not by might, nor by power." But we are accustomed, during these days, to displays of might and power. The whole trend is towards the bigger, the faster, and the noiser. We seem to believe that if we talk in a loud voice, our words will carry more conviction. But it is not the power of our voices, but the wisdom of our words that matters. We shall be heard, no matter how quietly we speak, when what we say is of value. We seem to think that we shall prove our strength if we are violent in our actions, intolerant in our attitudes, when we use force to compel others to follow our lead. But our true strength shows itself in quiet ways, when, in God's spirit and certain of His love, we grow strong enough to be gentle.

THE SEEING EYE

The hearing ear and the seeing eye,
the Lord has made them both.
Proverbs 20:12

Two PEOPLE walk along the same stretch of road. One will see only the dull monotony of the road's surface, going on and on without variation, will listen to nothing but the unchanging sound of his own footsteps. The other will hear the small rustlings in the undergrowth as little animals of meadow and wood go about their business, will catch the chipmunk's chatter, or the birds' chirping talk, or the whisper of the leaves; will see the pattern of light and shade through the trees, the color of half-hidden wild flowers, the delicate design of ferns. For both it is the same road, but for one it provides only a solid surface for his feet; for the other it opens up the width of the world.

We are given eyes and ears, but whether or not we see and hear with them is for us to decide. We can find anything and everything monotonous and dull if we listen only to the sound of our own voices or never look beyond the area of our own small interests. But with "seeing" eyes and "hearing" ears life is never without variety, or color, or fascination. There is beauty everywhere if, with eyes that are trained to see, we have vision; there is meaning

in everything if, with ears that have learned to hear, we have understanding.

We train our eyes to see when we learn not just to glance, but to notice and to look. We live in a world of great loveliness. Even for city-dwellers there is always color, motion, design, sound. There are clouds in infinite variety of shape and tone, slanting rain, or a star or two at night. A puddle can reflect the sky, and sunlight makes patterns on pavements as well as paths. To seeing eyes the world offers beauty.

If we train our eyes to see and our ears to hear, we shall begin to understand the greatness that is in simple things and the simplicity at the heart of greatness. We shall come to realize that in small things we can learn the meaning of the large, in a little loveliness we can glimpse all beauty, in one moment of sight we can lay the foundation of our faith. Are we dissatisfied with what we have and restless where we are, and do we think that all that is good, or beautiful, or true is far away, in the future, beyond the horizon? It is here, if we could only see it.

If we have "seeing eyes," we look beneath the shell, below the surface. So much that is valuable is hidden from the casual glance; so much that is true is not heard in words. If we could teach our eyes to look not only at what lies along our path, but into the meaning of what we see, then we should have not just sight, but insight. If we could train our ears to listen not only for the sound of words, not only for the meaning of words, but for the language that has no words, then we should have not just hearing, but understanding.

If we have "seeing eyes," we live in a fascinating world. There is no monotony, no boredom, no dullness in it. Things in themselves are not boring, work in itself is not dull, people are never commonplace. If we find them so, it is because we look at them with unseeing eyes. How can a world be dull or ugly while it has light, or color, or shape, or motion in it, even in its smallest, its most familiar bit? How can a task be uninteresting when we can find in it opportunity for learning and growing? How can a person be commonplace when each of us is made up of so many variations,

and each of us is different from the other? If life seems dull, surely it is because we do not see, because we cannot hear.

So much comes in little things, so infinitely much: goodness, and truth, and beauty, and wisdom, and faith. And we have much if we have "seeing eyes" and "hearing ears"—and understanding hearts.

FAITH

For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels,
nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come,
nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else
in all creation will be able to separate us
from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Romans 8:38

THIS IS one of the greatest, most triumphant expressions of faith ever written. And we know, from St. Paul's life, that it was completely sincere. After his conversion he lived by and for and with this faith, and so, after all the centuries, his words are still alive and alight.

What is faith? It is belief, but stronger than belief; it is conviction, but conviction with a spiritual meaning; it is trust, but deeper and more enduring than trust. Faith is a personal thing. No one can shape our faith for us, for it is through our own thoughts and feelings that we have faith, and our own strength and capacities will determine the greatness of our faith. Faith comes from within. When we say we have "lost faith," we have lost it because of some failure in ourselves. Either the material for our faith has been badly chosen, or we are not strong enough to hold to it. Great faith is had only by those who have greatness in them.

Our lives are shaped by our faiths, by what we believe in and in whom we trust. We must have faith in others if any relationship in our lives is to be rich and satisfying. When we "have faith" in someone what does it mean? It means that we know her, know the kind of person she is. It means that we trust her, trust her even when she makes mistakes. It means that we are loyal to her, loyal even when others turn against her. It means that we do not allow jealousies or suspicions to weaken our capacity for belief. If we have real faith in someone, nothing that person does in a moment of failure, nothing that others say of her, nothing that our own weakness tempts us to feel, can shake that faith in her—in the real "her." Such faith does not come easily or without hurt, but if we are big enough to give it to our friends, we are giving them something priceless. We know what it means when someone has faith in us even when we stumble and slip. It brings out the best in us, it gives us something to hold on to, it makes us want to deserve that faith. We know that when we are trusted, we are better people; we know that when we have faith in others, both they and we are the richer for it.

In Mary Ellen Chase's book, *The Lovely Ambition,* which tells the story of a Wesleyan parson and his family transplanted to a New England village, Mrs. Tillyard is speaking of her husband: " 'He's always believed that life is better than it is, or at least can be made better if everyone does his best to make it so. He was just the same when he was young as he is now, always trusting people, always believing that they're just like him and want everything that's —well, noble and good. I suppose you'd call him an idealist, or a romanticist, or—oh, I really don't know!' . . . 'It's possible, of course,' said Mrs. Baxter in an unusually thoughtful way for her, 'that he's just a Christian, which the rest of us aren't.' " Faith in the good, the God, in others *is* the Christlike way.

We must have faith in ourselves if we are to grow in faith. That does not mean that we are conceited, that we have a high opinion of ourselves as we are, that we think we are better and finer than others. But it does mean that we know, surely, that each of us has in her the power to be good and to be fine. When we have faith

in ourselves we know that we can be better if we make the effort, we know that even though we stumble along and often fall, we can pick ourselves up and still get there; we know that no matter how often we fail, we can succeed if we keep trying; we know that, although we behave badly, there is good in us waiting to be used, and that each of us has something valuable to give. Faith in ourselves does not mean that we consider ourselves better than others, but it does mean that we know we can be good, and that that good is important. With this faith comes the strength to go on.

If we are to climb higher as we go along, we must have faith in the best and highest moments we have known. We have all had the experience of a time in our lives when we have known a quick flash of pure happiness without being able to explain the source of it, or a time when we have suddenly been aware of beauty in some form, or a time when we have felt a new strength within ourselves or a new fellowship with those around us, or a time when we have heard a voice, not with our ears, but in our hearts. These special moments are not long, at least not long in measured time, but we must not lose faith in their reality and their value, or doubt that they are our moments closest to truth. Our best and highest moments are our truest, and we can, we must have faith in them.

But underlying everything, what makes all other faiths possible, is our faith in the reality of goodness, our faith in God. Faith is a personal thing; we cannot be told what we must believe. We must feel and think our own way to faith. But until we can win for ourselves the unshakable belief that, beyond what we can see, or hear, or touch, there is a power and a presence of eternal goodness and wisdom, all our other faiths will waver. We do not have to see to believe. As Jesus said to the woman who was cured of a twelve-year illness by pressing through the crowd to touch his garment: "Thy faith hath made thee whole." We could be "whole" people, too, if we had enough faith in the healing power of God.

If we search for faith with all the powers we have, we shall find it, though not without struggle and hurt. And if we find it, and if we do not fail it, it will not fail us. Then we can say, and say triumphantly with St. Paul, "For I am sure."

THE FIVE TALENTS

And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, . . . His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much.'
Matthew 25:20, 21

THIS IS part of a story, or parable, told by Jesus—the story of a master who went away on a journey, leaving with each of his servants a certain number of talents, a "talent" being, in those days, a piece of money. When the lord returned he asked each servant what he had done with his money, and in the answers Jesus makes the point of his story. The man who had doubled the value of what he had been given was commended, but the man who was afraid, and buried his talent, and had no increase to show, was rebuked and lost the little he had. We can picture the scene—the master, home again after a long trip, eager to know how things had gone in his absence, calling his servants in to report. One by one they tell how they had worked to increase the value of what had been given them, and are praised for their efforts. Finally it is the turn of the last servant. By then he must have realized that he has wasted his chance, but he has to confess that what he has to show is no more than what he had been given. It may be that he is shocked

at being scolded and punished, for, after all, he had not lost the talent, or given it away, or made bad use of it. In any event, it is now too late to do anything about it, and he stands condemned because he did not make good use of a gift from his master.

This is a parable, and, as always, there is a spiritual meaning in the material examples given. Jesus told this story in language his audience could understand, using familiar terms to illustrate his point. And at first hearing the judgment of the master might seem a harsh one. Should a servant be condemned for having saved and cherished a gift? But if we translate the "talents" in the parable to talents as we use the word today, if we think of the master's gift not as pieces of money, but as God-given opportunities and privileges, then we may begin to understand the real meaning of the story and how we should apply it to ourselves.

We are at the beginning of a camp summer, a period of time during which we shall all be tested. We are being given certain opportunities and privileges, and we all bring to our life here certain individual talents and capabilities given us by God. What are we going to do with what we have been given? Are we going to make the most of our opportunities, and are we going to increase our talents so that we shall have more to give? Or are we, through laziness, or selfishness, or fear, going to make no good use of our gifts? We have the advantage over the servants in Jesus' story, for we know its end. We know what is expected of us; we know that we are being given opportunities to use, not to bury, and we know that at the end of our time here together we shall have to answer the question as to whether we have made good use or no use of what has been given to us. It is a time to think of the parable of the talents in relation to our own experiences.

A camp summer brings us many privileges and opportunities. If we will, we can use them to make ourselves, and those with whom we live, far richer. We are privileged in our surroundings. There is loveliness along every path and in every view. Are we going to see it, feel it, make it part of ourselves, or are we going to pass it by without ever noticing?

We are privileged in our opportunities for learning, for adding to our knowledge of the outdoor world, for increasing our skill in many activities. Are we going to be wiser, more perceptive, and stronger at the end of the summer, are we going to develop and increase our talents, or are we going to waste our chances because of laziness, or inattention, or fear?

We are privileged in the companionship of our community life. We have the opportunity here of knowing the happiness of sharing, the satisfaction of teamwork, the joy of friendship. But we can, through selfishness or conceit, go through this time without once realizing the richness of a shared experience.

We are privileged in the great opportunity we have of learning self-discipline, self-control, self-respect, self-reliance, so that we shall be fit to be free. But we may refuse to learn the lesson of liberty because we have not the understanding or the courage to want responsibility or freedom.

We are being given many opportunities, many gifts, of which we should make use. Are we going to use them, well and fully, or lose them? We are all given our own particular talents. Are we going to increase and enlarge them so that they bring richness to life, or are we going to bury them? As we go through the summer, as we go through life, we would do well to remember the story of the five talents. For if, in all the small ways of our daily lives, we make use of every opportunity for growth, if we work to enlarge and to increase the talents, the gifts that come to us from God, then we shall be able to say with the servant of the parable: "Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more." And we shall deserve the commendation: "well done."

HERE I AM

Then I said, "Here I am! Send me."
Isaiah 6:8

HERE IS a statement of five ordinary words, clear in expression, plain in phrasing, and straightforward in meaning. And yet its implications are broad, and the more we study it, the more deeply involved we become. To be able to say, without reservations, "Here I am," implies complete readiness; "send me" means submission. And so this statement, which on the surface seems so simple, becomes complex.

"Here I am." Am I? Am I available at all times to be "sent" wherever I can be of use? Am I listening for directions? Am I ready in the sense of being fit for whatever needs doing? Surely "Here I am!" is more than a statement of the obvious fact of physical presence; it is more, much more, than a casual comment. It is a declaration, eager, confident, and wholehearted. It says that I not only want to be used in God's service, but that I am prepared to do anything He asks, and that I have strength enough to carry it through.

There are many examples in recorded history of men and women who "gave up" wealth or security or position to do God's work, and many more of whom we have never heard. But in our con-

temporary world one whom we all know is Albert Schweitzer. European by birth, almost unbelievably gifted (author, philosopher, musician, theologian, scientist), assured of success and high position, he has chosen to give his life and his great talents to the natives of French Equatorial Africa. He has been able to say, and has said: "Here I am! Send me!"

We could not dare to say to God, "Here I am!" unless we felt in our hearts the overwhelming desire to serve Him. Without this wish, we would be silent. We could not say it unless we were ready to go anywhere, to do anything that He might ask of us. There are no reservations in this statement: it does not say that sometime in the future, under favorable conditions, we would be willing to do what we could. It means that we are ready now. We could not say it unless we knew that we were fit to be used, the "fitness" we achieve when, by means of daily training in self-denial, through self-discipline and self-control, we are strong in will, in courage, and in faith. We cannot dare to declare "Here I am!" until we are sure of our own strength, God-given and self-nurtured.

When we say "send me," we are placing ourselves in God's hands, submitting to His will. We are not declaring that we will go in the direction of our choosing, but that we are ready to be sent wherever He wishes. We could not say it without humility, the attitude that makes us aware of a higher authority, that opens our minds to learning and our eyes to our own shortcomings. We could not say it unless we were willing to follow directions, the directions we shall hear if we listen with open ears and hearts to God's word and the voices of our own conscience. We cannot dare to say "send me," until we are humble enough for submission to God's will.

"Here I am! Send me" is a statement to which our sense of the dramatic may respond. It has an emotional appeal. But we must study its implications and be sure where it would lead us before we could dare to say it honestly and wholeheartedly. It is not an arrogant, impulsive declaration, but a thoughtful, serious, humble

dedication, an offering of ourselves. We cannot say it without faith, faith in ourselves because our strength comes from God. We cannot say it unless we are willing to be used in any way, to be sent anywhere. We cannot say it except in humility. We cannot say it without giving all of ourselves to God's service.

LOYALTY

And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus,
"Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times."
And he went out and wept bitterly.
Matthew 26:75

THE STORY of Peter's denial of Christ is one of the most heartbreaking in the whole Bible. Here was the disciple who was closest to Jesus, whom he loved and upon whom he depended, who had given wholehearted and devoted service to his master. Peter even followed Jesus to his trial, when the other disciples had run away. And yet, when it came to the final test, even Peter, the most faithful friend, was disloyal. He, too, deserted and denied Christ. We can understand this story, for we experience it in our lives. We also, like Peter, fail our friends; we too, because we are afraid, are disloyal to the best.

Loyalty is a word we cannot take lightly. There are no degrees or shades of meaning in it. We cannot be loyal in part, or loyal some of the time. Either we are loyal all the way, or we are disloyal. Loyalty demands our best—our highest courage, our deepest wisdom, our finest unsefishness, our most sincere humility. Loyalty is one of the greatest of human qualities, and the more we learn of it, the nearer we come to it, the better able we shall be to serve God.

We love our friends, but can we say that we are completely loyal to them, at all times, in everything, to the very end? Would we give up the things that mean most to us in order to stand by them? Have we faith enough to stay with them when they fail, or courage enough to support them when everyone deserts them? We fail to be loyal in little ways, by a word, a gesture, or a silence. And if we are disloyal in small matters, we cannot hope to be faithful when the big tests come. Jealousy tempts us to be disloyal, as do selfishness and egotism. A longing for popularity, for the approval of others, may prevent our being loyal. And often our fears are too strong for us. It takes courage to be loyal, and it takes self-denial, and understanding, and faith, too.

We know and appreciate the best, but are we loyal to it? Or do we settle for the second-rate, or accept what is unworthy, because it is easier? We may have a fine standard of behavior and a high ideal of character, but we do not succeed always in living up to them. There is in each of us the potential for goodness and for greatness, but so often we fail to realize it because we are not willing to give the effort or make the sacrifice that is necessary. We hear the phrase, "loyal to the royal in ourselves." Can we understand the meaning: that the best in us is truly good—royal, and rich, and fine—and that we must give it our loyalty? If we fail, in conduct or character, it is not because we are incapable of the best, but because we are disloyal to it.

We love God, and have faith in Him, but is it a constant, unshaken faith? In time of danger we may be afraid, in time of sorrow and tragedy we may question, in time of temptation we may weaken. If so, we deny God. We have proof, complete and everlasting, of His power and love, and yet we doubt, and fail in trust and loyalty.

We may be discouraged when we realize how much loyalty demands of us, and that often we fail in it. But the recognition of our disloyalties may be, should be, the beginning of wisdom for us. If we feel honest regret and sadness when we fall short in loyalty, and the feeling goes deep enough, we can, from that moment,

begin to grow in strength and usefulness. This is what Peter did. When the terrible realization came to him that he had denied Christ, "he went out and wept bitterly." We can understand his feeling. But, if we are to learn from his story, we must follow it to the end. For, from this moment, Peter gave his life to the service of God. He was, as Jesus said, "the rock" on which the church was built. In the bitterness of the knowledge of failure to be loyal, Peter found the courage and the wisdom for his dedicated life. By contrast, Judas, whose betrayal of Christ was the more complete, when he recognized what he had done, went out and hanged himself. He was the coward, and set the seal on his disloyalty.

When we fail to be loyal—and we do fail—may we learn from it, and forgive others their disloyalties as we hope to be forgiven. There is no greater gift that we could give our friends, or give our God, than our loyalty.

SERVICE

But I am among you as one who serves.
Luke 22:27

THERE IS a story that at the end of the second world war some American soldiers, quartered in a bombed German village, began to help the villagers clear away the rubble and repair shattered buildings. The big job was the ruined church. Slowly they patched the broken walls and the fallen roof. Then one day they began to put together the fragments of a statue of Christ that had fallen from the high altar. At last they were ready to lift the image back to its pedestal, and watchers could see that it was almost like new, except that they had not been able to find the marble hands. So at the foot of the handless Saviour they wrote this poignant line: "I have no other hands but yours."

"I have no other hands but yours"—this is Christ speaking directly to each of us. It is a short, simple sentence, but how infinitely much it has to say to us. It has the power, if we read it right, to raise the whole level of our daily living, for if Christ needs our hands—and minds and hearts too—to do His work, what greater incentive could we have to give service where and when we can?

We think, perhaps, that we have little to give. We look around us and see others with far greater gifts and talents, those who are

stronger and wiser than we, and when we compare what we are able to contribute in service with what they can give, we may decide that our part, or our job, is too small to mean anything. But it is not the size of a job that determines its worth; it is not the scope of our service that makes it of value. The very smallest cog in a machine may be the most important, and unless it fulfils its function the larger parts will be unable to do their work.

"I have no other hands but yours." This is spoken to each of us. It means that for each of us there is some way in which we can serve God, and that the particular service each is fitted to give cannot be given by another. Each of us has her own work to do in the world, her own place to fill. It may not be a big task, or it may; it may be a prominent place, or it may not. That does not matter. What does matter is that it is ours, and that if we fail in it, something is lost, something that is important in the whole structure, or pattern, or scheme. None of us should ever feel that what she has to give is not of value because it seems small. Value is judged by quality, not by size.

We all have work to do, every day. There is always a contribution we can make, a service we can give. Is our first question going to be: "How large is it?" or "How much is it worth?" It is an impossible question to answer, for we cannot know. It will be as large as we make it, as valuable as what we give of ourselves to it. In itself a task, a service, cannot be called big or little. It becomes big or little as a result of how much we give to it, and how we give it. Any task is a small one if we give less than our best, any work can be dull if we are dull, any job is a little one if we are little in mind and heart. But the reverse is also true. No service is small if we give ourselves, generously and gladly, give all we have to give, to it.

We all have work to do, every day. Shall we do it grudgingly, shall we complain and "gripe," shall we be scornful of it because we think it not worthy of our talents or our position? Perhaps we shall. But if we do, all we shall accomplish is worthless service and proof of our own littleness.

"I have no other hands but yours." Our hands are needed, we

are needed. In how many ways, we cannot tell; where, we cannot know. But we must be ready. And to be ready, we must be trained. And training means practice, day after day, practice in little things so that we may be prepared and fit for the big.

"I have no other hands but yours." Are our hands ready and fit to do Christ's work? They can be. For our work, dedicated to Him and done in His way, is His work. We can be sure of that.

"But I am among you as one who serves." Jesus is speaking here. As He came to serve, lived and died to serve, may we learn to give service, to the best of our abilities with our whole hearts and in His spirit.

BUILDING THE HOUSE

He is like a man building a house, who dug deep,
and laid the foundation upon rock; and when a flood arose,
the stream broke against that house, and could not
shake it, because it had been well built.
Luke 6:48

So OFTEN in His teaching Jesus uses a parable, or a simile, to give greater emphasis and clarity to the message He wants us to hear. Over and over again we find such phrases as "he is like a man who," or "the kingdom of heaven is like unto." He takes the spiritual, the intangible thought and tells a story or paints a picture that clarifies the thought for us. He brings it to the level of everyday life and common experience so that we may see, and understand, and remember. In the above text, for instance, as soon as we read it we see a picture, the picture of a house being built, a house so sturdy and well-made, and on such a strong foundation, that even a flood cannot shake it. That much we recognize; the picture is clear to our eyes. The next step is to understand its meaning, the message it has for our minds and spirits. At times we are puzzled by a parable, and find it difficult to translate into human terms, but here the meaning is clear. The man "building a house" is any one of us developing her own traits, creating her own personality, forming

her own character. To "dig deep" and "lay the foundation upon rock" surely means to give thought and care to the fundamental, the basic qualities within ourselves. And the "floods" that come must be the crises in our lives, the times when we have to face discouragement, failure, or tragedy, the times when we need great strength and courage in order to stand firm and not be shaken. And so we may read the meaning of the word-picture in the text. How, then, shall we apply it to ourselves and profit by its message?

In the process of character and personality building, we may be ambitious along many lines. There are things we should like to have and to be, many alluring goals we should like to reach. We should like to be popular, to develop the charm and the wit, the attractive qualities that would make others like us; we are anxious to achieve prominence in our chosen field, to have our talents recognized and respected; we enjoy the thought of success; we want to be happy, free to follow our desires and realize our ambitions. There is nothing wrong in all these things, and much that is right and good. But we must be certain that we do not reach for them until we have the strength to do it. We must be sure that we do not neglect the foundations in our attempts to build something that will attract attention and admiration, that, in our desire for popularity or success, we do not forget the important thing is character—what we *are,* not what we can, for a time, appear to be. It is the basic qualities, deep within us, that count, no matter what we wish to make of our lives.

It is not easy to give the thought and effort necessary for the development of strong character. There are other things in our days that seem more interesting or exciting, other considerations that appear more demanding at the moment. Can it make a real difference if we sacrifice a small kindness for the sake of a good time? Is it important if we give in to a little weakness or dishonesty just this time because it will make us seem smart? Does it really matter if we spend a great deal of our time in caring about the impression we can make on others instead of concerning ourselves with what we are making of ourselves? The answer, whether we

like it or not, is "yes." It does matter, very, very much. The most important thing in our lives, for which we are entirely responsible, is the making of character. We can never hope for real success in anything, we can never be able to meet the real tests in our lives unless, or until, we have built for ourselves the inner strength, the basic character on which we can depend. And we can do this only slowly, with careful, constant attention to the fundamental qualities that make for strength—honesty, courage, kindness, generosity, purity, and the like. Every time, every little time we fail in them, we weaken ourselves. These qualities are not showy, and they will not bring us easy popularity or quick success. But they will make us strong, and it is strength of character, firm within us, that we shall need for what is worth having in life. May we learn to "build the house" by "digging deep" and laying "the foundation upon rock."

GOODNESS

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord?
And who shall stand in his holy place?
He who has clean hands and a pure heart.
Psalm 24:3-4

We might look for more dramatic or showy qualities to be demanded of those who are to reach the heights, those who will know the "high" and "holy" places of God during their lives. We might expect that great courage would be needed, and wisdom, and strength, and daring, qualities that might, perhaps, be beyond our capacities. But we are reminded here that the "hill of the Lord," as the psalmist expresses it, will be climbed by those who have clean hands and pure hearts.

If this text seems to have little relation to our everyday, sometimes prosaic lives, we should remember that the language of the Psalms is the language of poetry, but that their essence, their message, is practical. We may enjoy the Psalms as we do poems, for their beauty and their emotional appeal; but if they are to have influence and meaning for us, we must translate them into words that will clarify and make them applicable to our daily lives.

When the psalmist speaks of "ascending the hill of the Lord," surely he does not mean, in the physical sense, climbing a steep

place. This is a figure of speech, and the phrase would not have much significance for us if we were to take it literally. But no great stretch of imagination is needed to give it a broader meaning and make it applicable to all of us, at all times. Surely "ascending the hill of the Lord" means coming close to God, living the kind of life and being the kind of person that He wants and that will lead us to Him. And who is this person? "He who has clean hands and a pure heart": another figure of speech. But we may translate it into: he who is honest, and just, and sincere, and kind, he who is genuinely good. What this text does is to remind us of a truth we often forget, or to which we are indifferent—the value and the power of simple goodness.

Goodness is not a dramatic quality; it does not catch our attention, or fire our imaginations, or appeal to our ambitions in the way that courage or brilliance might. It may go unnoticed, at first. But in the long run it is the quality that cannot fail to win our respect and confidence, and our affection too. It is the basic quality we cannot do without if we are to do and to be what God wills.

It was said of Lincoln by one of his biographers, Ida Tarbell, that "from his boyhood he would keep faith with that which his mind told him was true, though he lost friend and place by it." Once he was convinced in his own great mind that something was right, he held to it all the way. In breadth of vision, in clarity of purpose, and in selfless devotion he stands head and shoulders above the rest. These are qualities that set him apart, give him his place of honor in our history; these are the qualities we revere. But what we love are his human qualities—his kindness, his mercifulness, his fairness, the warmth of his justice, and his honesty. He lives in history as a truly great man; he lives in our hearts as a simple, good one.

If we are scornful of what we call "goodness," it is because we have not learned to define the word correctly. It is true that we are not apt to like the person who makes a show of what she calls "being good." We cannot admire or respect the one who is smug and self-satisfied, pleased with herself because she considers herself

more virtuous than her companions. And we are right in this. For we may be sure that anyone who makes a parade of being good is neither sincere nor humble, and without humility and sincerity there is no true goodness.

What does it mean, to be "good"? What does the psalmist mean when he speaks of "clean hands" and a "pure heart"? We know. We cannot pretend that we do not know what goodness is, though we may not appreciate its power or realize its value. Goodness is truthfulness, and sincerity, and honesty; it is kindness and generosity; it is fairness, and clean-ness, and faithfulness, and simplicity. It is within the reach of all of us if we care for it as we must. It is not spectacular, but it is a shining thing; it is not for show, but for foundations. It is a quiet quality. We may not give a name to it when we meet it, but we sense that we may put our whole trust in it, always. It shows itself in small, silent ways, and it speaks without words, yet its power is unlimited. To have scorn for goodness, or to underrate it, is to show our own littleness. To love, above all things, that which is good is to make sure that we, as we grow and reach, will have firm ground on which to stand.

Goodness does not consist only in not doing what is wrong, but in doing, and giving, and being what is right. It is not a negative virtue, but a positive, living force which can remake lives. We make mistakes, we do and say things for which we must be sorry, we fail to live up to what we know is right; but if we can grow in goodness, simple, honest goodness—we may hope that we shall never lose touch with God or fail to find the way to His "holy place."

THE NARROW GATE

For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life.
Matthew 7:14

WHAT MEANING can these words have for us, here, now, in these surroundings, as we begin our life together? Surely the words of the text do not apply to us, with the loveliness of the world spread wide before us, ours for the taking, and laughter, and fun, and happy companionship to mark the days. There would seem to be no narrowness and little that is hard in the way that stretches ahead of us for the next weeks. And yet these are words that are meant for us, even though we are privileged and the gate seems to stand wide open for us. Perhaps, in fact, we should listen to them with even greater care because we are so fortunate and the way appears so pleasant and easy.

"The gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life." What is Jesus saying to us, today, in this sentence from the Sermon on the Mount? Perhaps the clue to the warning given us lies in the last few words of the phrase. What is meant by "life" here? Surely what is always meant when Jesus uses the word. "Life" does not mean merely being alive, getting through the days in a careless, casual, lazy, selfish way. "Life" is a living to the full

extent of our capabilities and powers; it is a reaching, a growing, a learning, a giving, a searching that never stops; "life" is strength, and wisdom, and joyful faith. If we give this meaning to the word in the text, then we may see how it applies to us, here, today. For surely we want to live, not just exist. We want to know life at its happiest and finest in these lovely surroundings and in this happy companionship. And Jesus tells us that there is no way to life but the hard way.

If we want this summer, or any period in our lives, to have meaning, how must we approach it? Planning and resolution there must be if we are to be alive to the opportunities that are here for us. It is within ourselves that we must begin; it is in our own resolves for our own selves, and how we carry them through, that the story of our lives will be written. Before we may know the best, we must make ourselves fit for it. It is not what is given us that matters half so much as how we use it, and the using depends entirely on each of us, on how each has trained herself in order to be ready.

Training is not an exciting occupation. Often it is nothing but dull routine, drudgery even, but we must go through it if we are going to be in condition to meet the challenges of the future. Consider athletes. We read of Olympic swimmers whose practice laps in a pool add up to four and five miles a day; we see pictures of champion milers running alone through sand and up rocky hills in daily workouts. Why? Because they know that although natural ability is an asset, and the excitement of competition can serve to inspire them, nothing but training—hard, monotonous, constant training—will give them the stamina and the technical skill they need if they are to be winners. Nothing can substitute for conditioning.

How do we train ourselves, prepare ourselves so that any experience, any period of time, will be of meaning and of value so that we shall know "life"? This is a question each must answer for herself; each must make her own resolves and call on her own strength to carry them through. But here are chapter-headings for

three suggested lessons, lessons we should do well to learn and in which we all need training.

The first is the lesson of self-discipline. Until we can learn to control ourselves, unless we can accept for ourselves, honestly and wholeheartedly, the laws and rules which every happy community must have, until we have earned the right to be trusted, we shall not know what life as a free citizen means, respected by others because we have gained our own self-respect.

The second is the lesson of service. To train ourselves to see and feel how and where we may give rather than get, to grow in understanding because we have learned to consider others, to gain the mastery over our own selfishnesses and become wiser as we grow more generous—this is to open for ourselves new doors to life.

The third is the lesson of dedication to the best we know and the best we are. If we can learn this, then we shall never be satisfied with the second-rate, or what is cheap, or what is unworthy in ourselves. We shall always be trying to reach something a little better, a bit higher, something of real value. And in so doing, life will become richer and more full of challenge and meaning.

Self-discipline, service, dedication to the best: none of these is easy. "For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life." But if we can accept the hard way and strengthen ourselves so that we shall be able to follow it through to the end, then we shall know a "life" that will give us rewards and joys beyond measure, and along the way we shall have contributed our full and good share.

THE SECOND MILE

And if anyone forces you to go one mile,
go with him two miles.
Matthew 5:41

WHAT DOES this text, taken from Christ's Sermon on the Mount, mean to us? Why should we go two miles when we are required to go only one? We must try to realize what Jesus is saying to us here, for if we can understand the meaning and the value of that second mile, and can apply it to our daily living, it will show us new horizons.

The citation of the Medal of Honor, awarded by Congress in time of war to those servicemen showing special courage, ends with these words: "gallantry—above and beyond the call of duty." It is the "above and beyond" that expresses the spirit of the second mile. The duty of a soldier is to obey orders, which may lead him into hardship as well as danger. But he is singled out when he does more than demanded or expected, when he goes beyond "duty" into the area of the second mile.

If we think of the "one mile" as the distance we are required to go on any job, or as what we are ordered to do by law, or as the minimum amount we must give if we are to meet our obligations as good citizens and good friends, then we can begin to see how the

text applies to each of us. The first mile is clearly marked for us, the boundaries of it are set, by others and by our own consciences. In order to travel it, not too much imagination or courage is needed, or too much effort. And we shall have plenty of company along the way. We can go just that far and feel, perhaps, that we have done our duty. Is that enough, according to Christ's teaching? No, it is not. It is the "second mile" that counts—the mile that leads us beyond the limits set by our duty into the area that has no boundaries except those imposed by our own wishes and our own strength.

So that we may apply this text to our everyday living, suppose we imagine that a certain task has been assigned to us—a piece of work, a responsibility, an obligation. We know that we are duty-bound to do it. We look on it as something that must be done, yet our main concern is in getting through with it as quickly as we can, with as little effort as possible. We are interested only in fulfilling the requirements, in doing a reasonably good job, perhaps, but accepting without question its limitations and being glad of them. We go the one mile because it is required of us, but that is as far as we go. What have we learned and what have we contributed if we give only what we must? Surely very little of which we may be proud. If we are "one-milers" our vision will always be limited, and our growth too. And that first mile can be very dull if we never look beyond it.

But suppose we come to that job in the spirit of the second mile, concerned not with how small it is, but with how big we can make it; not with how little, but how much we can give to it; not with how short a time is needed to complete it, but how far we can go in it. Then it becomes not a task, but an opportunity, and never dull, but satisfying, and challenging, and full of interest.

We can apply this text to everything in our lives. The one mile, the first mile, is demanded of us. We must carry out our required share of work and responsibility, we must live up to certain set standards, we must give a certain amount of ourselves to our fellows if we are to be acceptable citizens and friends. This is expected of

us, and we agree that it is necessary. We are forced by convention and custom to go the first mile. But it is the second mile that counts, the mile that is not marked out for us by others, but which we explore and travel on our own, the mile along which we make our real contribution and attain our real growth. The first mile demands little of us but obedience; the second mile demands our best. If we could approach everything in our lives in the spirit of the second mile, we could travel a long way. This is the spirit that makes us want to give our all to a task, to a cause, to a friend—the spirit that opens the view to far horizons. We travel the first mile by duty done, by obedience to others and to law, by giving what we must; we go on to the second mile through service freely offered, by giving all we can. Let us pray that we may understand the difference, and choose to go all the way along the path of the second mile.

FRIENDSHIP

I have called you friends.
John 15:15

IT TAKES two to make a friendship. And it takes wisdom and generosity to make a true, a lasting one. When we stop to think of all that our friends mean to us, and what life would be without them, we realize that only our best is good enough for them. But are we not, too often, inconsiderate in our friendships? In our acceptance and use of them are we not sometimes selfish? They are so much a part of our everyday lives that we may come to accept them as a matter of course. But should anything as valuable as a friendship be treated thoughtlessly? With our friends we can be our natural selves. One of the blessings of friendship is that it can be "free-and-easy," without strain or reservation. But that does not mean that we can be casual or careless about it, accepting it as our due, thinking only of what it can bring us, using it for our own ends. If we value our friendships, we must be willing to pay the only price they demand—the generous and happy giving of our best selves. It is not what we get from our friends that makes real friendships possible, but what we give to them.

We must give them courtesy. Too often the easy, natural relationship we have with our friends leads us to believe that we do not

have to bother to be polite, or considerate, or thoughtful. We know that we do not have to strain to make a "good impression" on them, and so we become careless in the matter of courtesy. But if we are courteous to strangers, and to those whose lives touch ours only briefly and casually, are we not willing to give the same kindness and respect to our friends? Surely we owe them that, at least.

We must be honest with our friends. There can be no cheating in friendship, no pretense. All must be clear, open-and-aboveboard between us. No relationship worthy of the name of friendship can be based on anything but honesty. If we cannot be truthful with our friends, willing to have them know us as we really are, sincere in our dealings with them and our feelings for them, we shall lose them, and deserve to.

There must be faith in friendship, generous, confident faith. If we are suspicious of our friends, not willing to trust their affection for us, looking for excuses to mistrust them, quick to have "hurt feelings" and to imagine that they are slighting us, then we shall never know the enduring joy of friendship. It is our own pettiness, our selfish concern with little suspicions and jealousies, that so often makes us unfit for friendship. Anyone who has been given the gift of a dog's devotion will understand Lord Byron's tribute to the Newfoundland:

". . . in life the firmest friend,
The first to welcome, foremost to defend."

It is their unquestioning, undemanding trust in us that makes our dogs so deserving of our friendship, and so loved. We may discipline or desert them, even be unkind to them, we may let them down time after time and show our worst selves to them, but still they have faith in us and are ready to love us. They do not ask for explanations or excuses: they merely wait until we come back to them, and no matter what we have done, their welcome is as warm and their faith in us as sure as though we had never been away. Isn't this the way it should be in friendship?

We must respect our friends. Friendship does not give us the right to invade the privacy even of those who are closest to us. If doors are closed to us, we should not try to open them, or to look through the keyhole. We want to share most things with those we love, but if there are some which we need to keep to ourselves, some places in our hearts which we cannot open to others, we have the right to privacy. And that is a right we should grant, without question, to others, and above all to our friends.

We must be generous, not only to our friends, but with them. We cannot attempt to hold them too closely to us or we shall lose them. We must share them, gladly, with others; proud, not jealous, of their successes and popularity. We must allow them their freedom. If we do, we shall never need to be afraid that they will pull away from us. If friendship is to be real, and enduring, and joyful, there can be no possessiveness in it. Our friends are never truly ours until we learn to let them go, with open hands and hearts.

Courtesy, honesty, faith, respect, and freedom—do we give these to our friends? If we do, we may know, every hour and through all the years of our lives, the joy, the comfort, the strength, and the blessedness of friendship.

COURTESY

The good man out of the good treasure of his heart produces good . . . for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.
Luke 6:45

THE GREAT German poet Goethe says that there is a "politeness of the heart." It is a nice phrase, expressing a nice thought, and is as good a definition of courtesy as we could find. It carries the same idea as that put into words by St. Luke in the text: "out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks." Both men are implying, if not actually saying, that true courtesy is a matter, not merely of on-the-surface manners, but of what is in our hearts.

Certainly good manners are a part of courtesy. But good manners that we put on or off with our moods, that are used for show, good manners that we produce only in public, that are all form and have no substance, are not worth very much in the long run. Good manners are nice things: they make life pleasanter and happier; we owe them to our friends and to those we live with and those we meet. Rudeness is hurtful. Quiet courtesy in manner and words can do much to relieve tension. There was a letter in one of the New York papers not long ago from an habitual rush-hour bus rider, explaining his technique in dealing with what was always a major problem.

Boarding the bus to find the passengers crowded into the front end, and the driver understandably irritable, this wise man would say in a firm but calm and courteous voice: "Will the more thoughtful people kindly move to the rear of the bus." It always worked! Everyone would smile—and move. We must be polite if there is to be harmony within our circle, but being polite, outwardly, is not enough. It is when we feel polite, when good manners are a result of what is in our hearts, that we are truly courteous. Good manners are a part of courtesy, but only a part.

To be courteous we must be kind. We must be generous in our judgments, quick to see the good in others and very slow to look for faults. We must want to help, and not to hurt. There is no happier quality than kindness, but it demands a great deal of us. We cannot be jealous and be kind; we cannot lose our tempers and be kind; we cannot be selfish and thoughtless and be kind. Kindness is not a manner of speaking, but of living: it is not merely lack of unkindness, but a positive, affirmative thing. Kindness is one of the great qualities. Those who are truly kind, deeply essentially kind, are those we love, and trust, on whom we depend, with whom we love to be. Kindness draws us closer together. There is not enough of it in the world and we can never have too much of it. And those who are truly kind can never be discourteous.

To have courtesy we must learn thoughtfulness, and thoughtfulness requires imagination and understanding. We must, in our minds, be able to put ourselves in another's place, and that takes imagination. We must be able to see why others feel as they do, and are as they are, and that takes understanding. Thoughtfulness is anticipating another's wishes and needs, of knowing what will give pleasure and help to those around us, of being concerned with the happiness of others. Thinking of the "other fellow" is the first step towards thoughtfulness. But we must go further. We not only have to think about another, we also have to understand her; we not only have to do something to help another, we have to do, or say, the right thing. And in order to know this "right" thing, we must be able to put ourselves in another's place, to understand her. If we can

do that, if we can use our imaginations to good purpose and be sensitive to the feelings of others, and appreciate others' wants, and difficulties, and needs, then we may become truly thoughtful, courteous and considerate, companions and friends.

And we cannot have courtesy without gentleness. If we are rough, abrupt, or uncontrolled, sooner or later we are bound to hurt. And courtesy never gives hurt. As with kindness, gentleness, is not a negative quality. Weakness has no part in gentleness. Gentle people are strong people, for gentleness requires patience, and discipline, and self-control. And when we are gentle, we shall be courteous.

Good manners, kindness, thoughtfulness, gentleness—all these go into the making of courtesy. They are qualities that produce the courteous word and the courteous act, and make the courteous person. For we must go deeper than polite speech and learn "politeness of the heart" if we are to be courteous. If we are polite at heart we need not worry about our words, for "of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."

TOLERANCE

And if you salute only your brethren,
what more are you doing than others?
Matthew 5:47

It is easy to be tolerant of those who agree with us, with our ideas, our beliefs, or our conventions, and with those whose lives do not touch ours in any sensitive spot. And we find it less difficult to be tolerant when we ourselves can feel secure and happy in our particular world. When we trace it to its source, intolerance seems, very often, to be grounded in fear, in the need we feel to bolster our egos or defend our position. Our tendency to judge and to condemn others is stimulated because we are, deep down, afraid of what they may do to us.

We should be certain that we understand the real meaning of tolerance. To some, the intolerant ones, it means weak-kneed acquiescence; to others it suggests a self-satisfied, smug attitude towards inferiors. It is neither of these. To be tolerant is to accept happily, with insight and understanding, rather than to judge and to condemn. Tolerance creates harmony and happiness in any society, and this alone gives it value. It deserves our consideration and our respect.

"If you salute only your brethren," if we are tolerant only of those

whose opinions and attitudes coincide with ours, "what more are you doing than others," what justification have we for being satisfied with ourselves? It requires no effort to accept, respect, and admire those who feel and think as we do. It demands little of us to understand and appreciate the point of view of those who share our faith. It is easy for us to forgive the shortcomings of those we love and those by whom we are loved. But tolerance of those who differ with us in fundamental beliefs, who fail to conform to our standards of conduct, those who threaten our security or disturb our way of life, tolerance of those who are not our "brethren" is another matter. Our first instinct is to condemn that with which we cannot agree and that which we are afraid to accept. Face to face with the unfamiliar and the unknown, the easy way out is rejection.

We are intolerant when our minds are so narrow and our vision so restricted that we cannot see beyond our own small circle of society. Nothing outside our own experience has interest or meaning for us, and any deviation from custom or convention is unacceptable. What is "different" is to be feared, and therefore cannot be tolerated. Those who saw the screen play *Lost Boundaries* will remember how poignantly its story illustrates this thesis. It tells of a doctor who comes with his family to practice in a small New England town. Unknown to his neighbors, even to his children, the doctor has Negro blood, though he has passed for white all his life, a concealment forced on him by economic and educational demands. A good man, skilled in his profession, and civic-minded to a high degree, he becomes one of the most respected and best-loved citizens of the town. Then the fact of his ancestry is discovered, and the whole community, which had rightly honored him as a man, rejects him because of his race. Are we guilty of such intolerance?

We are intolerant when our self-satisfaction is so complete and so comfortable that we reject anything that might shake it. We are quite content to be where we are and what we are, and we do not dare to approve of anything that might force us to move.

We are intolerant because it is far easier to reject than to understand, far simpler to pass judgment than to be just.

We are intolerant when our beliefs have their origin in convention, and our faith is of form rather than substance. Then we are afraid to examine or to admit the good in opposing convictions because they threaten to open a crack in the rigid construction of our creed. And so we condemn them without reason.

To be tolerant is to believe in the reality, and the breadth, and the all-inclusiveness of God's love. To be tolerant is to admit our own shortcomings and failures and allow them to others. To be tolerant is to understand even when we cannot agree, and to respect though we cannot follow. Tolerance comes with generous understanding and wise perception, and when our trust in God is so sure that we gladly leave all judgment in His hands, our faith so strong that we need not be afraid.

FELLOWSHIP

Every one helps his neighbor,
and says to his brother, "Take courage!"
Isaiah 41:6

Could we imagine a world in which everyone followed this way of living, in which the ruling motive, in all relationships, was to help and encourage those whose lives touched ours? It seems an ideal beyond our reach. And yet all that is needed to make this world a world of universal fellowship is for every individual, in her own community, to live in fellowship with those around her. We shall not have fellowship by means of national regulations or international law; we cannot legislate a world into being thoughtful, or tolerant, or kind. We shall have fellowship when we, each one of us, can offer to our "neighbors" and our "brothers" a generous, happy friendliness that is not limited by envy or restricted by intolerance.

If we cannot visualize a whole world dominated by the spirit of fellowship, we can, at least, reduce the picture to the small scale of our own community. This is the place for which and in which we are responsible. It is a small place as far as physical boundaries go, but in a spiritual sense no community is ever small, for its influence is unlimited. Are we doing our share in making our particular

community a segment of society where friendliness and understanding are offered freely, where the desire to help and to encourage others is paramount?

Suppose new neighbors are moving in next-door. We had known the old ones for a long time, had grown accustomed to their quiet, conservative ways, and relations between us had been pleasant and friendly. The new ones are unknown, and sure to be different. Even before we know them, we look on them with suspicion, irritated by the fact that our comfortable way of life may be disturbed, and that a new element is being brought in. In this frame of mind it will not be difficult for us to find things to criticize about them when they come, or to let ourselves be annoyed by their habits. Perhaps they have a barking dog, or children who come through the hedge; perhaps they leave grass uncut or leaves unraked, or keep late hours. If we look for faults or differences, we shall surely find them. And on these little things we base our judgments and with them feed our resentments; and so build a fence of distrust and dislike to shut them out, and ourselves in, and gone is the chance for fellowship with the family next door.

Learning to live harmoniously with those around us, those whom fate and circumstance have given us as "neighbors," is not always easy. It takes doing, "getting along," day after day, under all conditions, with those in the same group, or the same community, as we. It is not always simple to be friendly with everyone, to be considerate and generous, to show patience and self-control. We shall surely "rub each other the wrong way" at times, there are bound to be irritations and annoyances that creep in, our likes and dislikes can rule our behavior if we allow them to dominate. We are quick to offer a helping hand in times of crisis, ready with sympathy when tragedy occurs, but in day-by-day, ordinary living on the ground level, when small differences seem important, when personalities clash and tempers rise, we shall find it none too easy to hold to the idea and the ideal of fellowship. But if we cannot offer it to those who are near us, can we hope for a world in which it rules?

"Every one helps his neighbor, and says to his brother, 'Take

courage!'" Do we? Have we ever tried it? Is there harmony or is there discord in our neighborhood, wherever we are? Living in it, we are personally responsible for the presence or the absence of fellowship in our community. Are we good neighbors—friendly, tolerant, thoughtful, helpful? The answer is important. We cannot have the same degree of affection for everyone whose life touches ours, and we do not find equal enjoyment in the company of all. But this does not mean that we cannot learn to live harmoniously with others, all others. Being a good companion to our special friends, to those we like, isn't enough. If friendliness is limited, it loses its meaning; it must reach out to all. If friendliness is dependent on our moods, or if we give it only in return for friendliness given us, it is not of honest value. Friendliness is fellowship when it is constant, unrestricted, and unlimited—when it is for all.

Fellowship is God's way. Christ's words can remind us of this: "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink. . . . As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." How many of our "neighbors" are hungry or thirsty for what we could give, how many are lonely because they feel apart? Can we help? Yes—in fellowship.

THE CHOICE

Give thy servant therefore an understanding mind . . .
that I may discern between good and evil.
I Kings 3:9

All our lives we shall be having to make choices. Time is not unlimited, and we are constantly having to decide how best to use the hours available to us; our strength, our energies, our capacities have limits, and we shall have to choose how to direct them and where to apply them so that they will not be wasted. Assuming that we wish to make of ourselves the very best we can, that we are resolved that what we do will be well done, and what we give of real value, we are still faced with a problem. We must recognize and understand what is genuinely valuable. We must know, surely, what is good and what is bad. Otherwise we shall waste our time and our talents on what is not worth our efforts.

Often it is not easy to distinguish between good and bad. Things are not always all black or all white: there are shadings and borderline differences. Sometimes we seem to be faced with the choice between two rights or two wrongs. How to decide between them? We shall need wisdom and perception, a sound sense of values and honest minds in order to make sure that we are choosing well. We must train ourselves to judge values.

The value of the "right" choice is dramatized for us in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. In his will, Portia's father has designated three caskets—one of gold, one of silver, and one of lead —one of which holds the portrait of his daughter. Portia's suitors are to be offered the choice, and he who chooses the casket with the portrait will be her husband. It is Bassanio, finally, who has the wisdom and the insight to choose—not the "gaudy gold" or the "pale and common drudge 'tween man and man" of silver, but the casket of lead of which he says: "Thy plainness moves me more than eloquence," and so wins the prize. He was a perceptive and a wise man, and he chose well.

"Give thy servant therefore an understanding mind." How may we grow in understanding, the understanding that will make it possible for us to see clearly and to judge truly? Surely not by closing our minds or shutting our eyes to anything outside ourselves, not by limiting our interests to what concerns only ourselves. If we look only in, never out and up, if we think only in terms of "I," we shall not understand, we shall not be able to make the good choice. Understanding comes when we see the wide view, when our minds are open to let in the light, when our hearts are large enough for generosity, and sympathy, and tolerance to live there. But understanding does not grow in us only through our feelings. We must have clear vision and keen minds too, so that we may see through sham and deceit and recognize the truth. We need to feel, to sense, in order to understand, but we need to think also.

How shall we know what is good and what is bad? We must first want to know. The wish and the will must be there; we must care whether or not our choices are good. If the true value of something means little to us, we are never going to take the time or make the effort necessary to train ourselves in judgment. For it does take time, and interest, and thought, to learn to distinguish between the true and the false. It must be of real concern to us whether or not we are able to judge, and each mistake we make must serve as a lesson.

To recognize true values so that we may judge truly, we must have the long view and the open heart. As long as we are interested only in ourselves, with what we can get, with what others can give us, with protecting ourselves, with what lies within easy reach, we shall never grow in understanding. How can we judge if our knowledge is limited to our own little lives, our own small selves? How can we have a true perspective if we see only what is near at hand? How can we know the real value of something if we are interested only in the gain it will bring to us? A perceptive mind and an understanding heart develop only if we are willing to look beyond ourselves to the larger view, to search the depths and climb the heights in order to see, to give of ourselves to others so that we may know them, and thus grow in wisdom and tolerance.

"Give thy servant therefore an understanding mind . . . that I may discern between good and evil." We could not ask for anything better. To be able to recognize what is true and what is false, to see what has real value and what is only cheap, to know what is enduring and what is only of and for the moment, and to understand the difference between honest goodness and pretense, means that in the time and with the strength given us we shall be able to give and be our best. We shall have the power to make the right choice.

ENDURANCE

But he who endures to the end will be saved.
Matthew 24:13

THERE IS an old prayer, a favorite of Sir Francis Drake, which enlarges on the theme of this text: "O Lord God, when Thou givest to Thy servants any great matter, grant us also to know that it is not the beginning but the continuing of the same until it be thoroughly finished, which yieldeth the true glory." Here we are faced with the question as to whether or not we have the determination, the staying power to carry through to a conclusion and a completion. Those good resolutions we make on January first, how many do we keep? Those projects we begin so happily, how many do we finish? Those ambitions that inspire us, how many are fulfilled in our lives? Given imagination, reasonable ambition, and an honest desire to be of service, most of us will make a good beginning in the direction of a worthwhile goal. But how often do we get there, all the way to the end? How often do we "continue," as the prayer says, until the matter is "thoroughly finished"?

When we make up our minds to attempt something, whether that something is a small task or a large project, the beginning is apt to be easy and happy. We are helped along by that pleasant glow that comes with the making of a good resolution, and inspired by a

vision of what the results will be. But the vision, the thought, the intention are not, in themselves, enough. For fulfillment, for the "thorough finishing," we need much more. And that "much more" is not easy.

The old, familiar fable of the hare and the tortoise is a case in point. The hare was one of those cocky individuals, very conscious of his own talents and given to making fun of his less gifted friends. And so when he was challenged to a foot-race by the lumbering tortoise, he was amused at the whole thing, but he agreed. He started off in fine style, putting on a burst of speed to leave his opponent far in the rear. Pleased with his performance, he decided to have a rest, and promptly fell asleep. We all know the end of the story—how by the time he woke up and got under way again, the plodding tortoise, who had never given up, was across the finish line. The moral is obvious!

Carrying through to completion, enduring unto the end, requires a particular kind of strength. For real success in any venture we must have "staying" power, the ability to keep at something and never give up, no matter how hard it is, how long it takes, or how often we fail. The dream and the ambition we must have: they start us off on the right path and guide us. And they furnish the inspiration that will make us want to keep going. But unless we have the actual strength—of body, mind, and spirit—that we need, we shall not be capable of carrying through to the end. Wanting something is not enough. We must also be strong enough to reach it.

We need this strength, this staying power, because the path to any real accomplishment is never easy and never short. There are many rocks in the path, and it seems to go uphill most of the way. We shall stumble many times, be tired and discouraged often, and it will be easy to convince ourselves that we had better turn back or give up. Or we may lose our way from time to time and become panicky. And somehow the dream and the ambition have faded, no longer bright enough to keep us going. What we need then is the kind of strength that won't allow us to stop trying, the will and the

determination and the staying power that keep us going even though our minds and imaginations tell us to give up. It is this strength that will make it possible for us to "endure to the end."

But even if we reach the point of realizing that we must have this kind of strength in order to carry through to completion, that realization, in itself, is not enough. For we are not strong all in a moment or because we want to be. Strength is built of small things, very slowly and very carefully fitted together. It is made of little self-disciplines and self-denials, it grows as self-control grows. We must add to it each day. We cannot neglect it and expect to find it when we need it. It increases only a small amount at a time and with constant care. But we can be very sure that with every discipline of self, with each success in self-control, we are stronger. We can know that each time we want to give up and do not, we have added to our staying power. It is these constant, daily additions, no matter how noticeable they are or are not, or how important or unimportant they seem at the time, that add up to a strength on which we may depend, a strength we must have if we are to be capable of endurance.

Our path to faith is not easy. To travel it until we come close to God and can walk in His way will need endurance, the strength that keeps us going and in the right direction. We may have a vision of that way, but vision is not enough. We must have staying power too. We must have strength enough to carry us through the discouragements, and disappointments, and defeats that will shake our faith and dim our vision. And that strength comes slowly, with the habit of turning to God for guidance and power in small things as well as large, with prayer in our hearts, not just once or twice a day, but at all times. So we shall be able not only to begin, but continue to the end our search for a sure and constant faith. We know that God is there: it is we who must reach Him. And, "he who endures to the end will be saved."

SERENITY

Thou dost keep him in perfect peace,
whose mind is stayed on thee.
Isaiah 26:3

SERENITY is a rare quality. There are few we know, or meet, in whom we sense an inner peace, a tranquility undisturbed by outward confusion. When we feel it in someone, and it is a quality we recognize even though our knowledge of the individual is superficial, we know that here is a person we may trust, one who is mature in judgment and steadfast in strength, one who is at peace within because of a deep and constant faith. Those who are serene have quiet places in their hearts where they can "be still, and know," as the Psalmist expresses it.

Most of us are restless. We feel we must fill our waking hours with motion or with sound. We seem to be fearful of quietness in our lives, or perhaps it is habit that makes it hard for us to accept a silent time. We have not learned how to use it, so feel lonely or afraid in it, or else we are so continually busy and harassed that we have lost the power to be still. But what shall we ever hear except our own voices if we are never quiet, what shall we know except that which needs no thought?

Certainly there is less and less silence in the world as time goes on. We are in a greater hurry to get somewhere, and make more noise in doing it than ever before. And science has given us the mechanical means of filling with sound any hour that might have been a quiet one. We are living in a noisy, restless time, and so perhaps it is harder for us in this age to become familiar with stillness and to know its value. But as our opportunities for it grow fewer, our need for it grows greater, and when it does come, we must be wise to use it.

It is in quietness and only in quietness, that we think things through. It is in quietness that we learn to know ourselves, to put together the pieces of our experiences so that they have meaning, to gather our feelings and emotions into order so that we may understand them.

In Helen Waddell's translation of *The Desert Fathers* the story is told of three good men who became monks. One chose to help men settle their differences and another to visit the sick. But they found that in the turmoil of the world, caught up in the quarrels and complaints of mankind, their spirits failed and they could not carry out their purposes. So they agreed to visit the third monk, who had withdrawn in solitude into the desert, and told him their troubles. He was silent for a time, then poured some water into a bowl and said, "Look upon the water." And they could see nothing, for the water was murky. After a while he told them to look again, and the water was clear and they saw themselves as in a mirror. And he said to the two, "So is he who abides in the midst of men: because of the turbulence, he sees not his sins: but when he hath been quiet, above all in solitude, then does he recognize his own default."

Serenity is far more than absence of sound and motion, but only if we learn to welcome stillness when it comes, only when we learn to use it for thought, for the realizing of our convictions and the deepening of our faith, shall we grow strong enough to be serene.

Serenity is nourished by quiet, but it is born in faith. It is only when we have learned to put our whole trust in God that we become serene. It is only when we can give our lives into His hands, know-

ing that nothing can really hurt us as long as we keep to His way, that serenity grows deep in us.

May we not be so busy with the little things in our lives, or so anxious to have ourselves heard, that we forget to be still. May we come to use silence as an opportunity for thought; may we train ourselves in quietness so that we can hear and understand, and may we make room for stillness in our hearts. These things will help us towards serenity. But may serenity be born in us because we have "stayed our minds" on Him who alone can give us perfect peace.

HUMBLENESS

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God.
I Peter 5:6

"HUMBLE" is a word which often is misunderstood or misinterpreted. As used, and used over and over again, in the Bible, humbleness (or humility) is one of the greatest of virtues, demanded of all true Christians. But the world tends to associate it with human characteristics that are anything but appealing, and a false impression of its meaning seems to be prevalent. Perhaps Charles Dickens is to blame for this, having created that most unpleasant character of Uriah Heep, who referred to himself with frequency as a most " 'umble" man. He wasn't, of course. One who boasts of humbleness is far from humble. But it is true that some of us have the feeling that humility implies a fawning, slavish attitude, and that a humble person is one who is spineless, flabby, and usually cowardly. This is a false conclusion. Humbleness is one of the greatest of qualities, and one of the most difficult to learn, or even to appreciate. We cannot overrate its importance, for its presence, or absence, in ourselves can be the deciding factor in our growth, in all our learning and all our living. It determines our approach to every experience and every opportunity; it influences our attitude towards everything in life. Until we are humble we cannot be taught.

If we are humble we know that we have much to learn, and that every person we meet, and every experience we face, has something to teach us. Conceit makes us blind, arrogance and egotism deaf to any voice but our own. But with humbleness our eyes and ears are always open, looking to see so that our vision may be clearer, listening so that we may understand. Conscious of our weaknesses and mistakes, we are not discouraged or defeated, but anxious to be taught. Realizing our failures, we are eager to do better, knowing that we can if we are willing to learn. With this attitude, growth is possible.

If we are humble we are grateful for the good and happy things that come to us. We do not take them as our due. We do not grumble, feeling that we deserve more or better, but in the understanding that comes with humbleness we acknowledge the truth that the more we are given, the more we must give. We accept these good things with thankfulness, knowing that they come to us as responsibilities, not rewards. In complacency or conceit we measure our gifts—our privileges, talents, opportunities—and look for more; in humbleness we say "thank you" with all our hearts, in wonder that we have been so blessed, and look for ways to use them well. With this attitude we may be worthy of what we are given.

If we are humble we reduce ourselves to the proper size so that we can see around ourselves. We do not allow the sense of our own importance to grow so strong that we are insensitive to others; we do not let the value we place on ourselves to become so inflated that it blocks our view. In egotism we do not look beyond ourselves. Our own affairs are so important to us that we have no concern for, no understanding of others. Our view is limited, for we are always in the way. But with humility the "self" that is so ready to step into the picture is kept in its place. It is there, but we can see around it. And we can see through it, too, through it to others who have much to give us if we do not shut them out. If we are humble we do not lack faith or confidence in our ability to grow, but we realize that we have much to learn and that others can teach us what we need to know. With this attitude, we may be taught.

There are people we know who are obviously virtuous. We can see no visible fault, find no glaring weakness in them. In manners and morals they seem above criticism. But they are so sure of their own "rightness," so complacent in their attitude, that we cannot like them. What is it they lack, these well-behaved, self-assured people? Surely it is humility, the quality that prevents us from being smug or self-righteous. Without it we remain small, no matter how prominent or powerful we become. It is at the heart of greatness.

Without humbleness we shall never see far, or clearly, or into the heart of things. And unless we come to Him with humble hearts we shall not find God.

If ever we allow ourselves to think of humility with indifference, or the humble ones of the earth with scorn, we would do well to remember the Christmas story and its unadorned facts. God, the Almighty King, came to earth in the person of a baby, born in a stable to poor parents, came quietly, by starlight, in a dark manger, unheralded and almost unnoticed—God Himself, the all-powerful. In the face of this, can we dare be anything but humble? "God never showed Himself so great as when He made Himself small." And we must make ourselves small if we are to know the greatness of God.

UNDERSTANDING

Give thy servant therefore an understanding mind.
I Kings 3:9

"To UNDERSTAND"—to comprehend, perceive, discern. All these are dictionary definitions, implying more than ordinary, factual knowledge. When we understand, we read more than is written, using not only minds, but hearts as well in our search for truths; when we understand we hear more than is said, for imagination and intuition are alert to listen for the real meaning underneath the words. Understanding leads us to fairer judgments, clearer vision, greater wisdom, and deeper insight. And of these things are born tolerance and generosity, courage, and faith.

Perhaps we do not want to understand. It is easier to take things at their surface value than to search for the truth below, to accept the obvious rather than look for what is hidden underneath. Because it feeds our own egotism, we find it pleasanter to condemn glibly than to judge fairly. Demanding little effort from us, it seems simpler to find fault than to hunt for the reasons, the motives, the incentives that lie behind. When we understand, we must give credit, we must forgive, and often that is hard, and, too, we are faced with looking at ourselves with greater honesty, and of that we are sometimes afraid. But to fail in understanding through laziness,

or conceit, or fear is to cut ourselves off from the richness of life. And we shall never find our way to a sustaining faith without it.

If we are to understand, we shall have to make an effort. But perhaps we belong to the class of what might be called "armchair" observers or critics. Comfortably settled in our well-padded, solidly built seats, secure in our favorite corners, with a "do not disturb" sign on the door, we can feel safe and satisfied. In this position it is easy to shut our eyes, and our minds; from this position we can have only one view, and one point-of-view—our own. This is bound to be a narrow, and eventually a deadly dull view. And so, before it is too late, we had better pull ourselves out of that armchair and open the door. There are people outside it that we never saw before; there are steps to climb that would lead us to a window with a wide, new view; there are rooms to explore. We might even bend down to look under that comfortable seat of ours. There is a good deal of dust under it, isn't there? And the cover is shabby and the springs sagging from over-use. These are things we couldn't see before we roused ourselves.

We spend a great deal of time thinking about, and talking about other people. Is it a fact that we tend to dwell on their failings and weaknesses? If so, we had better look to the quality rather than the quantity of our judgments before we let prejudice and malice rule our opinions and turn us into gossips and bores. We shall never have friendship or fellowship until our judgments are fair, sound and thoughtful, honest and generous, rather than flighty and unkind.

We love to be understood, and what is more, we expect to be. We are hurt and resentful if others fail to appreciate us and to forgive us when we make mistakes or fail to show our best. We are blessed when we find an understanding friend, one who sees through our failures to our good intentions, knows the good in us and brings it out, encourages and is patient with us because she knows our problems. Understanding gives us the happiest and most enduring relationships.

Without understanding we may have learning and knowledge of a sort, but we shall not be wise. Wisdom requires that we learn

with imagination and insight, not only by rote, that we appreciate values, that we concern ourselves with humanity as well as science and read history in the light of human endeavor. We may memorize words and numbers, but they will never have meaning for us until we learn to relate them, with understanding, to our lives and the lives of those around us.

We cannot know God unless we understand our fellow men. But understanding does not grow in us unless we can develop in ourselves those qualities that nourish it—patience and generosity, tolerance and humility—until we are wise enough to see clearly and deep and to judge fairly. It is through the understanding that leads to love that we can find our faith.

The wisdom of Solomon led him to ask for an understanding mind. May we be wise also in seeking to understand that we may grow in faith and feel the presence and love of God in all things and in all men.

THE WORLD AROUND US

Thou hast made the moon to mark the seasons;
the sun knows its time for setting.
Psalm 104:19

THE FACT that the laws governing the natural world are never broken, the order of the universe never upset, should be a source of continuing wonder to us. But we take this miracle so much as a matter of course that we rarely stop to marvel at it, or to search for the source, the guiding, controlling power that made the plan. As for the almost incredible loveliness of the outdoor world, in both its broad beauty and the perfection of its tiniest flower, we are so busy with "affairs" that often we do not even notice it or, if we do, we give no thought, or thanks, to its creator.

We never doubt that the sun will rise and set at the calculated time, year after year, century after century, and, unfailingly, it does. We may set our courses by the stars, and schedule our affairs by the ebb and flow of the tides, and never do they fail us. Science can predict to the moment the coming of the moon, foretell its eclipse, and plot the movement of the planets. But who can explain, with figures and tables, their constancy, or think that the mind of man could plan the universe?

In this modern age we are increasingly dependent on machinery.

It supplies what we feel are the necessities of daily life as well as the comforts and luxuries. We marvel at its efficiency, and when it fails us, as it sometimes does, we accept the fact that no man-made instrument is infallible and continue to regard it with awe, and even reverence. Yet the unfailing cycle of the seasons or the miracle of growth from seed to flower are of little concern to most of us. How often do we pause to wonder, and to worship?

Science is able to release forces of unlimited might and destructiveness. We can hardly fail to be awe-struck, if not terrorized, when we consider the power that man is capable of concentrating in one small package and directing where he will. Yet can any force controlled and released by human inventiveness equal that which pushes a tiny and, to all appearances, fragile leaf through frozen ground? Can we believe that any destructive force is greater than the creative, or more deserving of respect?

Man has not "made the moon to mark the seasons," nor can he change its course. Science cannot alter by a second the "time for setting" of the sun. In all the marvels of the scientific age there is no miracle to match the eternal order of the universe or the power that creates life. Have we forgotten this?

THE SEARCH

Ask, and it will be given you; seek and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.
Matthew 7:7

THIS IS a text that speaks directly to those who expect rewards to come to them without effort, to those who look for gifts without giving of self, think to find without searching, and feel that doors will open automatically. It is a text, then, that should speak to all, for there isn't one of us who doesn't, at times, take things for granted and feel that she has a right to privileges and benefits that she has done nothing about earning. There isn't one of us who doesn't throw away opportunities because she does not give what is needed of herself to make the most of them. We may agree with the text in principle, we like the idea expressed in it, but too often we fail to apply it to our own thinking and living.

It is no accident that not only the symbol, but the actual means of sanctuary on the north door of Durham Cathedral is a knocker. In the early days of this thousand-year-old cathedral, English men and women, fleeing from a crude justice that often condemned the innocent as well as the guilty, could find refuge if they were able to climb to the great door of Durham and could summon strength to use the Sanctuary Knocker. The door did not stand open, but it

would swing wide, and offer sanctuary and sustenance, to all those who reached up to knock.

"Ask—seek—knock—." These are Christ's words to us. He is telling us to do something; the words are a call to action, action in our living, in the small things that fill the hours of every day. If we apply them to ourselves they should influence our approach to every experience, our use of every opportunity, should affect all our relationships and all our prayers.

If we come to any new experience with the determination to learn as much as possible from it, to give as much as possible to it, we can be sure that we shall learn from it, and that it will bring us the rewards of greater wisdom and increased growth. If we look at it merely as something to be got through, sitting passively "on the side lines," we can be sure that we shall have nothing from it—no interest, no pleasure, no reward. But if we approach it with the desire to give our best to it, to explore every corner of it, the door to new knowledge and new strength will be opened.

There are opportunities in every day, opportunities for learning and growing. We can, of course, let them slip by, too lazy to rouse ourselves for effort, too blind to see their possibilities, too self-satisfied to want enlargement of our horizons. We can remain indifferent to them, and they will be gone, unrealized.

Because we live in the same place, or do the same things, as others, it does not follow as a matter of course that we shall know real companionship or find real friends. Friendship is not something that is wrapped up and handed to us, complete, as a gift; friendship is an experience, to be searched out and explored with all the wisdom and understanding we have. We shall never know the meaning of companionship if we stand on the outskirts and make no move to take part or share, or if we set limits to comradeship and allow only a few inside the boundaries. If we want the great treasures of companionship and friendship, we must give ourselves to the search. We cannot expect others to come to us; it is we who must make the move.

We may ask ourselves how much we give of ourselves to our

prayers. Have they become just a nice habit, or are we really "seeking to find" each time we pray, asking for guidance, reaching to knock so that the door may be opened? We cannot pray with only part of our minds and hearts, and only half our attention, and hope to find God.

"Ask, and it will be given you," but we must do the asking; "seek, and you will find," but we must make the search; "knock, and it will be opened to you," but we must move to enter. Gifts and treasures are here for us, but it is we who must work to find them. God waits for us, but it is we who must travel to Him.

THE NINE

Then said Jesus, "Were not ten cleansed?
Where are the nine? Was no one found to return
and give praise to God except this foreigner?"
Luke 17:17-18

THE STORY told in the 17th Chapter of St. Luke is of the ten lepers who, when they saw Jesus coming into their village, cried out to Him for help. He made them whole, gave them new life. And yet, of the ten, only one turned back to give thanks. When we read this story, each of us must ask this question: "Am I the one who thought of the giver and the greatness of the gift, or am I one of the nine who took it for granted and thought, arrogantly, only of himself?" It is a searching question.

Our first reaction might be one of indignation at the suggestion that we might be in the class of the nine who showed such ingratitude and discourtesy. We couldn't be ungrateful or unappreciative of such a gift. Or could we? If we could, we must be ashamed.

Here is the question: "In this Bible story am I one of the nine?" We must be honest in our answer. In order that we may be, we must answer these questions: first, do we ever stop to think of what has been given us; second, are we truly grateful; third, do we give thanks, and how?

First, what are our gifts, even of today, here? If we began to make honest lists, would there be room on a page for even a percentage of them? We could name health and strength, and beauty, and companionship, and opportunity, comfort and security, and be only at the beginning. Perhaps we never thought of these things as gifts. If not, it would be well if we changed the direction of our thinking. Are they ours because we deserve them, in return for what we have given? The answer must be "no." They are not ours as payment for something, but as gifts. Why should they be ours, when millions have never known them? We don't know why, but the question should curb our egotism and make us humble. Do we stop to think of what we have, as gifts?

Second, are we truly grateful? If we were, we couldn't "gripe" or complain, and the small things about which we whine wouldn't even be noticed. If we were, we could never fall into the destructive habit of feeling sorry for ourselves. If we were, we should never take for granted all the good and happy things which are ours, or consider that they are ours by right or in reward. If we were grateful as we should be, there would be no room in our minds and hearts for envy, or self-pity, or resentment.

Third, do we give thanks, and how? We accept, we are glad, we are grateful perhaps, but do we "turn back" as did the one in the story, to say "thank you"? Or, as one of the nine, do we go on our way without thought of the giver, without turning aside to express appreciation of what we have been given?

How should we, how can we, give thanks for such great gifts? One way is in words—in our prayers. We might well ask ourselves if to us prayer means asking, or if we give thanks when we pray. We can also say "thank you" in our minds and hearts by constant awareness of the gift, an awareness that will never allow little disappointments, or jealousies, or ailments to rule our thinking. And we can say "thank you" in our lives, in what we make of ourselves and what we give. We may not know why we are given so much, why we are among the fortunate ones of the earth, but we must, if we think clearly, accept the fact that they are given to us to be used

in the best way we can, for the good of others, in the service of God, the giver. We all have talents, abilities, powers, and surely they are God-given. It is for us to develop them to their fullest and best that we may serve Him the better. We give thanks, or we forget to give thanks by the way we live, by the use we make of what we are given. Are we going to be among the nine who failed to give thanks for the gift of life?

HILLTOPS

Get you up to a high mountain.
Isaiah 40:9

FROM THE beginning of time the mountains have challenged men, called the adventurous to climb, spoken of wisdom and beauty to the poets, lifted hearts and minds to God. Down through the ages man has endowed the high hills with human qualities—strength and patience, serenity and steadfastness. They have stood, calm and majestic, while the centuries went by in turmoil. Neither the world of nature nor the world of men has been able to move them, and through all the generations they have endured in unshaken grandeur, bringing us assurance and comfort.

The mountains challenge us to climb. But for climbing we must have strength and courage, self-reliance and self-control. The way to the top is not an easy one. We must first find the trail that leads there, and then have the vision and the stamina to stay on it. We cannot be led off to follow our fancies in every direction but must keep to the path that leads us up, learning that discipline and control are necessary if we are to climb, finding that we must depend on our own strength, rely on our own courage to reach the summit.

The mountains tell us to be patient and serene. We are restless people, most of us, so busy with the bustle and chatter of everyday

life that there is no time left for stillness, even in our minds and hearts. The hills remind us, as they stand quietly by, that we cannot hurry growth, that faith is not won quickly or courage in an impulse.

The mountains offer us a view, if we have strength to climb, a wider view than we shall ever have from level ground. If we cannot seem to see beyond ourselves and the walls of the house in which we live, we have only to take the path that leads to the top of the hill, and there, with our little world left below, we may find sight enlarged into vision. Our eyes will be able to see to the far horizon, and we shall know our own littleness, and the breadth of the world, and the shelter of the heavens.

We all have known "hilltop moments," when all at once we have had a flash of understanding, a sudden surge of happiness, an instant's vision of truth, a sense of complete faith. In the world of the spirit there are mountain-tops, high places in our lives when we have risen above our little, earthbound selves and reached a great height. There are moments in our lives when, suddenly, we are sure. These moments do not come often, nor do they stay, but it is enough that we have known them. In them we can trust: by them we must live.

We cannot live on top of a mountain, but we can go there once or twice, and that should be enough. When we come down the memory will be kept in our hearts if we are wise. And from the ground we may read the message of the everlasting hills if we have grown to understand it.

THE BACKWARD LOOK

No one who puts his hand to the plow
and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.
Luke 9:62

THIS TEXT suggests a picture—the picture of a broad, brown field, a plodding horse, and a man, eyes fixed ahead, guiding the wooden-handled plow in a long, clean furrow. If he is a good farmer, his objective is clear and he is giving concentrated, sustained effort to the reaching of it. If he is not, if he hesitates or "looks back," the plow will not cut a deep, straight furrow; if he is, he has committed himself to his chosen work and there will be no turning back until the end has been reached.

"Putting a hand to the plow" is a graphic figure of speech. It suggests a decisive action on our part, with a clear purpose behind it, and full understanding of the task ahead. If we were hesitant, or unsure of what needs doing we would not move to grasp the "plow." That we do is a sign of our readiness and resolve. But it takes more than initial resolve to finish the "plowing." An unswerving course to the end of the line is required, and the end may be far distant.

When we make a good resolution and see clearly the path we must follow, then we can think of ourselves as "plowmen," ready

for the day's work. Our problem now is to keep the planned furrow straight and clean, and to cut it all the way to the end of the field. If we "look back," it will be uneven or unfinished, and we shall be judged poor workmen, unfit for the Master's service.

What will tempt us to "look back" once we have made our resolution and have started on the way towards our goal? There will be distractions, of course. We shall be tempted to let our attention wander and our energies be diverted into other channels. Then, probably, we shall lose sight of our objective and never manage to reach it. We need concentrated effort, keeping the end always in view, in order to succeed in our resolve.

We may hesitate on the way towards the fulfilment of our purpose, uncertain of our ability and doubting the wisdom of our decision. If so, we shall lose momentum and, at the same time, our determination. If we are to go all the way, we cannot allow ourselves to waver.

The long path will test our strength. We may find that we are very tired before we get to the goal, and the temptation to stop and rest, even to give up, will be hard to resist. But we shall have to keep a sustained, steady pace if we can hope to carry through our commitment.

It may be that we shall allow the past to throw too long a shadow on the path ahead and we shall lose our way. Regrets for what has already happened, longings for what has been, past fears kept alive by turning back to look at them, will all put obstacles in the way of present accomplishment and future success.

Once having "put our hand to the plow" and committed ourselves to God's work, we cannot let distractions, or hesitation, or weariness, or concern with the past cause us to "look back." If we do, we shall lose our way, and the fine resolve with which we began will be gone, and our work will be unfit for God's service.

WITH GOD

With God we shall do valiantly.
Psalm 60:12

"WITH GOD"—here is a constant, eternal source of comfort and courage, available to any one of us at any time. Do we use it as we might, and should, or do we try, for varying reasons, to "go it alone" when we are in trouble? Perhaps we have not learned the way to God, perhaps we feel that our own resources are enough, perhaps we do not trust Him. Whatever the cause of our inability or our reluctance, if we are unwilling to put ourselves in God's hands and depend on His love and power, we shall cut ourselves off from the only reservoir of strength that is sufficient for every need.

With faith there are no limits. We all know Peter Pan, Wendy's Peter, who didn't want to grow up, so he flew away to Never-Never Land. But there is a younger Peter, a Betwixt-and-Between Peter, whom Mr. Barrie and his young friends met in Kensington Gardens before he was put in a play. This Peter could also fly: at least he could until he lost faith. For, as the story says, "The moment you doubt whether you can, you cease for ever to be able to do it. The

reason birds can fly and we can't is simply that they have perfect faith, for to have faith is to have wings."

Are we afraid, afraid of what the future may bring, fearful that our courage will fail us? We need courage so often, in so many ways. Few of us, if we have imagination, can face the unknown without fears. Many of us find it hard to hold to standards and ideals when we meet opposition or ridicule. The prospect of suffering, physical or emotional, may make us want to "run for cover." Even when we call on all the will power and strength we can find in ourselves, they cannot seem to give us the courage we need. We try to be brave, but fear is too much for us. But if we could learn to trust God, if we could win through to real faith, then we could give our fears into His hands and would no longer be afraid. We should know, then, that nothing or no one can really hurt us but ourselves; we should know that no matter what we are called upon to face or to go through, we shall be given all the strength and courage required if we have learned to go to God for these things.

Are we confused and uncertain, not sure of the way we should take? We may have good intentions, but the conflicting opinions of our friends pull us this way and that, and our own lack of a compelling conviction leads us into bypaths which go nowhere. We need a firm, deep-rooted belief for a guide if we are to keep on the right path, and faith to sustain us if we are to have the power to follow it all the way. We can find this conviction and this faith if we turn to God with open minds and hearts, eager to be taught, willing to be disciplined, and ready to surrender our lives to Him.

We want to "do valiantly," perhaps. We want to be courageous and strong, strong enough to stand firmly for what we know is right, brave enough to face the present danger and the future uncertainty without fear, confident enough to meet the crises in our lives with clear minds and steadfast wills. But the "wanting" is not enough; we must have the power too, the power that will never fail us. We cannot find it in and by ourselves alone; we shall need help. And unless we are too proud to ask for it, too arrogant to seek it, or too insensitive to see the necessity for it, we shall have

that help if we come to God for it. It is He who can give us courage for our fears and strength for our weakness; it is His power that will sustain us if we have faith. Not alone, but with God we shall be able to "do valiantly."

REVERENCE

You shall make for yourselves no idols and erect no graven image . . . You shall keep my sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary.
Leviticus 26:1-2

"Reverence" is a word, and an attitude, we need to understand. When we have reverence for something, it means that we have respect for it, but it also means more. Reverence has a deeper, broader meaning than respect; it implies not only admiration, but devotion, not just obedience, but surrender, and often it is used in a religious sense. We have respect for law, and obey it; we have reverence for what is above and beyond the law—for truth, and justice, and the highest good—and honor them. To have reverence for something means, first of all, that we have the wisdom to recognize what is worthy of being reverenced. "You shall make for yourselves no idols and erect no graven image," or, translated into simple words, you must not put your faith in what is not honest and good. We must know the difference between the true and the false. And, secondly, to have reverence means that we are able to forget ourselves, put ourselves in second place, in giving our wholehearted devotion and respect to something we know is bigger, finer, and more important than ourselves. Without under-

standing and without humility we shall not be capable of reverence, and without reverence we shall always be small people.

When we have reverence for something, we are looking up to it, we are admitting, gladly and humbly, that there is something higher than ourselves; we are opening our hearts and minds to learning and to growing; we are forgetting our little selves in our recognition of and love for something bigger. For some of us this is not easy. It demands of us a generosity of heart, a humbleness of spirit, a giving of self. But it makes growth and greatness possible.

Sometimes we meet people who seem to have no reverence for anything. They are scornful of ideals, they scoff at what is simple and honest, and make fun of what they cannot reach. They may be aware of something better than themselves, but they do not like the thought of it, and so they try to pull it down to their own level instead of lifting themselves.

We wonder at the motive, and the mentality, of those who feel impelled to scratch their initials on lichen-covered cliffs, scrawl witticisms on public walls, or break the spell of dramatic moments on-stage with chatter and giggles. Are their minds so small that there is no room in them for awe or wonder? Or are they such egoists that they must make sure they are noticed? Or perhaps they are afraid, afraid to "lose" themselves in something bigger than they. Whatever the reason, they try to belittle what they cannot grasp.

Because the scoffers and defacers can be witty and superficially clever, we may be influenced by them. But if we are wise, we shall think twice before we listen to those who laugh at what they tag as "virtuous," or imitate those who think it smart to show no respect for anything. To follow their lead is to shut doors for ourselves. They are the little people, those who scoff and sneer at goodness. They take the easy way, for it is always easy to make fun of things. They try to tear down because they are not tall enough to reach. We have to be on our guard against these people and the temptation to imitate them. We may tend to copy them,

first because it does not require much of us, and secondly because it is a cheap and easy way of attracting attention or building up our own ego. But a tendency can easily become a habit, and a habit grow into an attitude of mind, and we may become incapable of reverence. If this happens, our view will never reach beyond ourselves, and we shall shrink in size because there is nothing for which we have to stretch.

Without reverence in our lives, without respect for and devotion to what is genuinely good, without a willingness and a longing to give our allegiance to something higher than ourselves, we are shut in, limited in vision and incapable of growth. Until we come to our prayers with true reverence in our hearts, they are of no worth. To know what is good and what is God-given, and to have reverence for it, is to open a door in our lives so that light may come in.

THE GREATEST OF THESE

So faith, hope, love abide, these three;
but the greatest of these is love.
I Corinthians 13:13

THE 13th Chapter of I Corinthians is one of the most beautiful in the Bible, and probably we could repeat from memory many verses from it: "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love . . . and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love. . . . Love is patient and kind; it is not arrogant or rude . . . bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. . . . So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love." These words we have heard many times, and we should probably say that we know them well. But do we? Have we really studied them, or is it the sound, the poetry, of them that is familiar to us and which we love? Sometimes a poem speaks to us in its music rather than by its thought, and this might well be the case here. For this 13th Chapter of I Corinthians is one of the loveliest of all poems. And for that reason, even though we can repeat it word for word, and we respond emotionally to it, we may never have really understood it, or tried to think it through. And it is the meaning, not the sound, that is important.

Unless love is at the core, the center of our lives, we cannot hope

to find God. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart . . . thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There are no other commandments greater than these." Love—the center of everything, the most important fact in our lives.

We know that our human love cannot reach the ideal or approach the divine. But we know, too, that the quality and breadth of our loving will determine the extent and the value of our service in the world, and towards our fellow men, and to God. Love is not just an emotion, a sentimental feeling for something or someone with which we may play and then throw away. Love, in its God-given meaning, is a conviction, a faith, the life-giving, motivating force of our lives, the all-important, all-inclusive fact in our living. "So faith, hope, love abide; but the greatest of these is love."

What is the quality, and breadth, and depth of our love? Do we love ourselves more than others? Do we love what is good so much that we live by it? Do we know what it means to love? How can we know? We can't know, completely. But we may begin to learn if we read this chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians and take it to our hearts.

"Love is patient and kind." We know what that means. Could we put these qualities into all our relationships with others, we should certainly have taken a big step forward. "Love is not jealous or boastful, it is not arrogant or rude." That tells us that unless we can rid ourselves of self-love and conceit, we cannot know what love is. "Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful." We must learn to live for others, controlling our own wishes and tempers, never allowing anger, or resentment, or hatred to rule us. "Love does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right." That seems to tell us that our words, our actions, our thoughts, our ambitions must be controlled by and centered in that which is right and good, that we cannot be influenced by or reach for what we know is wrong. "Love bears all things, endures all things"—*all* things: discouragement, failure, unhappiness, injustice, suffering, sorrow. "Love believes all things, hopes all things." With true love in our hearts we never lose faith. "Love never ends."

Love is not something of the moment, a passing emotion, a pleasant sentiment, a static thing. Love grows as we grow, and as it grows, so do we. It is never completed. It is for always. It never ends and there are no limits to it.

Against this standard our human love seems fitful and poor. Yet if love, however imperfect now, is in our hearts; if, with all that is in us and above all things, we want to live by and for it, it will grow in meaning and power until it rules our lives and brings us close to God. Only by love shall we be able to walk in His way. "So faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

THE OPEN HAND

But you shall open your hand to him, and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be.
Deuteronomy 15:8

GENEROSITY is a very appealing trait, one that will create a happy atmosphere around us and win us affection. But it is not always easy to be generous. There are times when to "open our hands" requires much of us.

There are many ways in which we can, and shall be generous. The most obvious is with our possessions. There are some who have much in the way of material wealth, and there are some who have little; but our generosity is not measured by how much, in quantity, we give, but by how much we are willing to share of what we have. St. Mark tells the story of the widow's mite, how the rich men were giving large sums of money to the treasury, and, no doubt, feeling self-righteous about it. Then, as Jesus watched, a poor widow came along and gave "two mites," a small amount by comparison. But Jesus immortalized her by pointing out that she had contributed more than all the wealthy citizens because, while they had given something they would never miss, she had given all she had, and something she herself needed. We are most generous when what we give involves a sacrifice, when we give more than we can spare.

It may not be too difficult for us to be generous with material possessions, even with a large part of what we have, but are we generous with ourselves? If so, we are always willing to give all that we have to give of ourselves to others. It means that we are never too busy or too tired, too lazy or too occupied with our own interests, to give full attention to others when they ask or need it. It means that we are ready to give up what we want to do in order to help another; it means that we contribute to a group or a project all that we can, without holding back; it means that we spend ourselves, wholeheartedly and gladly, in service.

The manner in which we give is important, whether we make it easy or difficult for others to receive what we offer. There is a fable of Aesop's which tells of a stork who was invited to dinner by a fox. The host provided a very tasty dish of soup for his guest, but served it in a dish so flat that it was impossible for the long-billed bird to partake. It might be added that the stork, when it was time for him to return the hospitality, offered the fox a tempting meal in a pitcher with such a long, narrow neck that only the host could reach the contents! There are times when, by the way in which we give, we make acceptance of a gift, if not impossible, at least unhappy.

We may be generous with our possessions and ourselves, but if we are to be open-handed and open-hearted, we need also to be generous in our thoughts, searching for the good rather than the bad, the best instead of the worst. It is not too difficult to have generous thoughts of those who are less fortunate than we, those who have failed or are unhappy. But when another succeeds where we have failed, then generosity is really put to the test. Can we be sincerely glad of another's achievements, or does jealousy creep in? Are we ready to give honor where honor is due, and forget our own disappointments in another's happiness? We can and we are if we have generous thoughts.

Generosity must include being generous with those we love, allowing them a full measure of independence. We cannot try to keep them for ourselves alone, or mold them into our pattern.

Nothing that we can give in friendship is finer than a generous respect that allows others their differences, and a generous trust that makes them feel at liberty.

"But you shall open your hand to him"—open it all the way. We cannot put limits on our generosity. "And lend him sufficient for his need"—there can be no holding back. "Whatever it may be"—we must know that "whatever." It is not enough to want to be generous. Our wish or impulse must be directed by understanding, understanding of what the other's need is, of how much we should give, and how, and when, and where. Thoughtless giving is not generosity.

To be truly generous we must give gladly, in full measure, without fail, and with wisdom. If we do, we shall receive far more than we can ever give. Jesus says to us: "Give, and it shall be given unto you." What we keep for ourselves alone will make us poor; we are rich when we learn to give.

THE MERCIFUL

Blessed are the merciful.
Matthew 5:17

WHEN WE refer to a dictionary to discover the meaning of a word, we find first a definition, an explanation of the word itself. Following this there is often a list of synonyms, and if we are interested in a wider meaning of the word in question, we will find that a reading of this list may open up new lines of thought about the word and add life and force to it. For the word "mercy" there is an unusually long list of synonyms, showing not only its importance but the breadth of its meaning. Among its synonyms we find "compassion," "forgiveness," "gentleness," "grace," "kindness," "pity," "tenderness"—all words of warmth and goodness, all words that involve a relationship with someone else. We can be honest, or brave, or strong about things and within ourselves, but when we are forgiving and kind, when we show mercy, it is to another person. Mercy is an outgoing and an outgiving quality.

Living in a free country, we expect justice under the law, the law that awards compensation for damage done, sets punishment for crime committed. But in God's justice, law is not enough: something greater is needed. When, in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice,* Shylock demands his pound of flesh in payment of a

broken contract, he was legally correct, and we applaud the smart legal manoeuvre by which he was outwitted. We enjoy this twist of the plot and its cleverness. But the greatest moment of the play comes, not in Shylock's defeat within the law, but in Portia's plea for justice beyond the law, for justice with mercy:

> And earthly power doth then show likest God's
> When mercy seasons justice.

Justice under the law is necessary, and good. But above the law there is mercy, the "attribute to God himself," the mercy with which we may hope to be judged.

"Blessed are the merciful." How much mercy do we show to friends and companions as we go through the day? Are we not only tolerant, but kind? Are we not only fair, but forgiving? This is a big word, "mercy," and to have it, to show it, we must be big people, in mind and heart.

It is in our words and our thoughts, perhaps, more than in our actions that we fail in being merciful. We hurt others by thoughtless remarks, we hurt them by making fun of them. We hurt others by judging them without bothering to understand; we hurt them when we show that we feel superior, or when we ignore them or when we laugh at their mistakes. We hurt them when we leave them out. We give these hurts sometimes carelessly, sometimes deliberately, but we give them.

We fail in kindness, often, by doing nothing. Kindness is a positive word: we must do something, give something in order to be kind. We must use minds and imaginations, be able to see where a helping hand or a word of encouragement is needed, learn to appreciate the problems and handicaps of others, make them feel that they, too, have something to give. For this we have to stretch our imaginations, develop our understanding, and use our powers of perception. We have to control our tempers, forget our resentments and jealousies; we have to rid ourselves of snobbishness. In our thinking, others must come first, ourselves second. This is a

big order. But kindness is a big quality. It has breadth and depth, vitality and power.

Kindness is a big quality, but an even bigger one is forgiveness. When we are faced with having to forgive, it means that we have been hurt, possibly unjustly so. If we are punished for something we have done wrong, we have nothing to forgive. We know we are getting what we deserve. It is when we are harmed through no fault of our own, when we are hurt because of another's carelessness or ill-will, that we are challenged to forgive. We are not asked to forgive those who are good to us, but those who do us harm. Can we do it? We can, of course, but we have to learn some hard lessons along the way. One is that it is not what has been done to us that matters, but how we accept it. Another is that no one can really harm us, the real essential "us," but ourselves. Another is that if we are angry and resentful, feel sorry for ourselves, and hold grudges, the harm done to us is doubled. And we must remember, always, that there is a reason, a deep-seated and hidden reason for the hurt being given, and that we must try to understand it. When we do, we can forgive.

The greatest example of forgiveness in all history is that given us by Jesus on the cross when He said: "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." We have that example to live by, to think of when our own small hurts seem too big for us to forgive those who cause them. And let us remember, when forgiveness is asked of us, how often we need to be forgiven. We need mercy shown to us: let us show it to others. "Blessed are the merciful."

INTEGRITY

I will walk with integrity of heart within my house.
Psalm 101:2

We are the only ones who can know what is in our own hearts in our own "houses." It is we alone who can judge if it is honest and if it is fine; it is we, with God's help, who must fix the direction of our going and gather the strength we need. It is we alone who can know what we truly are. That essential self will show itself to the world in many ways, perhaps, but we have methods of disguising our real selves, of covering up the deep places in our hearts, so that others cannot see us whole. Do we "walk with integrity of heart within our houses?" Only we, ourselves, can answer that question, we and God. It is an important question.

At times it seems as though we were two "selves." The two may not be as completely at odds as were Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde—the former, as Stevenson phrased it, "the would do good," and the latter "the evil that is present." When the drugs discovered by the honorable doctor—drugs that would transform him into the evil Hyde and then back to his good self—finally lost their magic and he found himself faced with permanent occupancy of Mr. Hyde's personality, he had no alternative but to destroy himself. We may hope that we shall never be faced with the problem of two such

contrary selves, but we do have to be concerned with fundamental wholesomeness and sincerity.

What does "integrity" mean? It means soundness, uprightness, honesty—and wholeness. It is the quality that makes good growth possible, that keeps us straight and makes us strong. It is not a quality we assume in order to impress others. It is not for outward show, though when it is present, it shines through. We may not even put a name to it, but it is at the root of character and behavior, the quality that enables us to be steady, and truthful, and purposeful, that causes others to trust us, instinctively and deservedly. When we have integrity in our hearts there is little room there for uncertainties and fears.

We gain integrity when our primary purpose is to make of ourselves the very finest selves we can, when the desire for uprightness and honest goodness in ourselves is the controlling motive in deciding the direction we shall take. We gain integrity when the standards by which we live are based on sound principles, principles which we see clearly and understand fully. We gain integrity when we have learned to be honest, honest in all our dealings and relationships with others and, above all, with ourselves.

We cannot "walk with integrity" if we are continually troubled with doubts and fears, when we are unsure of our purposes and uncertain of our course. There must be a "wholeness" within us. We shall need a certain goal towards which we move, a sure faith to give us strength, a constant light to guide us. We cannot be continually wavering in our opinions and what we think of as our convictions, influenced by every fad or fashion, led here and there, diverted by others from what we know is right for ourselves. Without a strong, central conviction, and the courage to stand by it, we shall not have integrity. Our surest way to it is to find God, make Him the center of our lives, surrender ourselves to His direction, and trust in His love. Then He will be the controlling and unifying force within us, and we shall be whole.

"I shall walk with integrity of heart within my house." "Within my house"—not just in public, not only when there are others there

to see and to applaud, but at all times. This question of integrity is our own personal, private concern. We do not put it on for show, or assume it when we wish to make an impression. No one can lend it to us, no one can judge it in us. It is "us," whole and at peace within ourselves because we have put things right with ourselves. It does not matter what others think of us, or where they would have us go or what they would have us do. They cannot judge. We are not afraid of what others can do to us, for our faith is sure. We are not confused by diverging paths, for we know the one we must follow. And alone, within our houses, we are the same selves as we are before our neighbors, for we have integrity in our hearts.

THE DOERS

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only.
James 1:22

THERE ARE many of us who are quite willing to give what we call "moral" support to good causes, to lend vocal encouragement to "good works," or to "register" on the side of right. There are many who, Sunday after Sunday, fill the pews, repeat the words of the service with sincerity, and listen to the sermons with approval. And in so doing feel a pleasant glow of satisfaction in the consciousness of virtue. All this is good: we need the spiritual refreshment offered in community worship, and to ally ourselves publicly with good and with God is a step in the right direction. But it is only a step, and an easy one to take. To stop there will not take us very far along the road to duty and responsibility fulfilled. Lip-service can be no more than the prelude to real service if we are to do our full share.

"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only." It is a not uncommon experience for us to find ourselves moved, emotionally, by hearing the Word of God, to be stirred by the thought of being one of His followers. We subscribe wholeheartedly to the moral principles expressed in Christ's teaching and life; we are inspired by the ideal of Christian conduct. But there are many of us who

find that inspiration fading when we are faced with actual enlistment in God's service, with becoming a member, pledged to His work, of one of His churches.

Much is required of us if we are to be "doers," and not "hearers" only, much more than merely living decent lives, giving reasonable charity to our neighbors, and showing ourselves at church on Sunday. We may sit and listen with enjoyment to the voice of a minister repeating familiar words or preaching from his pulpit, but are our names on the church roster, and on as workers, not just communicants? Or do we go from church to church in search of music or oratory that will lift us out of ourselves and the routine of our week-day lives for an hour, and then allot our time and thought to other matters for the next six days? It is the church that carries on God's work, interprets and spreads His words, enlists and directs His workers. Until we are ready to join a church, whatever its denomination, we cannot consider ourselves His followers. It is in, and with, and for a church that we serve Him. The church is His organization on earth.

Our names may be on the lists, we may be communicants, as well as respectable citizens, but if our part in church affairs ends with attending a weekly service, we are little more than "hearers." There is much work to be done in and for any church. It may not be exciting work. The jobs to be done, as is true in any organization, are often small and routine, and sometimes dull. In the face of them, inspiration can die and resolve weaken. It is hard to believe that the lofty ideal of serving God should involve us in tasks that we might consider unworthy of our talents. Besides which, we are busy with what we are sure are important matters, with our homes, our businesses, our social or artistic lives. But for the church to be able to fulfill its mission it must have humble and dedicated workers as well as inspired preachers, workers who are willing to do the unnoticed, everyday bits that contribute something essential to the whole.

Do we leave the "doing" to others, while we go about our business? Do we listen to the Word of God with joy, feeling our

spirits lifted by the sense of His nearness, our hearts comforted by the knowledge of His love, and then allot none of our time, nothing of ourselves to the work of His church? If so, we are the "hearers" only, with no gifts to offer; it is the "doers" of His word who give Him what He asks.

LIFT UP YOUR EYES

Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these?
Isaiah 40:26

As we go along from day to day, it is true that much of the time our eyes are looking down at the path we are following in order to see where we are going, our view is limited to the things that are nearest to us, our minds are occupied with what we are doing. This is natural. We must be busy with the small tasks and problems of our daily lives; we must be ready to do our share of work and carry our responsibilities. We cannot live "in the clouds" all the time, or we fail in our duty of good citizenship. But unless, each day, there are times when we "lift up our eyes," and our thoughts, we cannot see things in their right proportions or perspective, we shall not develop a sound sense of values, and we may not find the spiritual help we need to carry our load. Unless we learn to look up to the heights, the small, immediate, and close things in our lives will loom so large that we shall lose the ability to see beyond and above them.

For centuries before science gave us the means to calculate with accuracy, sailors plotted their course by looking up at the stars. Hunters lost in the woods have found their way home because they could watch the sun's position in the sky. If the shepherds

on the night of the Nativity had been concerned only with counting their sheep, or discussing the affairs of village life, they would never have raised their heads to see the star that led them to the Christ Child. Until we lift our eyes to see, we shall be earthbound, uncertain of the way, blind to the guiding light that shines in heaven.

It is necessary that we learn to see things in their right proportions. The little grievances and hurts in our lives, the tiny problems, the petty disagreements—all these can seem very large, so large that they will block our view until we reduce them to their proper size by setting them beside the things that are really important and making a comparison. If we hold small slights and injustices in our hearts and nurse them, soon their will be no space left for happiness, and love, and faith. If our thoughts are busy all day with small worries, soon they will crowd our minds to such an extent that wisdom and knowledge will find no room in which to grow. But if we lift up our eyes, and minds, to see the vast space of sky above us, the littleness of our concerns will be apparent.

It is necessary that we learn to judge the true value of the things in our lives. If we spend our time and strength on what is cheap, or false, or trivial, we shall have no foundation on which to build, no vision by which to live. We must know the difference between the sham and the genuine, the worthless and the valuable. We cannot choose the best until we can judge the best, and this we cannot do if our sight is limited to what lies on the surface or at our feet. But if we lift up our eyes to see the mountain peaks, everlasting in their grandeur, what is false will lose its power to deceive and charm us.

It is necessary that we find the path to spiritual strength and guidance. Without faith in something greater than ourselves, without a vision of what is eternal, we shall be afraid and lose our way. In order to find God, and have His help and know His love, we cannot be concerned only with earthly things, we cannot limit our vision and our understanding to what is within reach, immediate and close. We must lift our eyes, and our minds and hearts too, to the stars and feel the nearness of God.

"Lift up your eyes and see: who created these?"—treetops bending to the storm, soft, piling, sun-lighted wind clouds dropping shadows on the hills, the rainbow arch, the gull's flight, the jagged streak of lightning. These are things to turn our thoughts, for a blessed moment, from a warring world of little men to the universe of an almighty God. If we lift our eyes to the hilltops, our minds beyond thoughts of ourselves, our hearts above the commonplace, and our spirits to where we may "be still and know" that God is here, we shall, surely, be able to see clearly, judge wisely, and find the strength we need for God's work.

(continued from front flap)

in her lessons. Many wonderful phrases are quotable:

"Affirmative living is reaching, searching, enlarging, trying for the best."

"To accept the rules of Christian conduct and character, to learn the disciplines of Christ-like living, is to know the meaning of liberty."

"Serenity is nourished by quiet, but it is born in faith. It is only when we have put our whole trust in God that we become serene."

These are not mere pep talks. Each message gives the hearer a sense of his own responsibility . . . and more than that, shows him a way to find the spiritual strength and guidance needed to fulfill it. He learns that he should not be concerned only with the earthly things, and that by living a better life he can attain the assurance that one can come closer to God and to the serenity each of us needs to live a Christian life.

MISS TOWNSEND has had wide experience working with young people in camps, schools, and churches.

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